

Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei

# Penang (Chapter)

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**Coverage includes:** George Town, Batu Ferringhi, Teluk Bahang & Around, Pulau Jerejak, Batu Maung, Kampung Pulau Betong and Teluk Kumbar.

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# Penang

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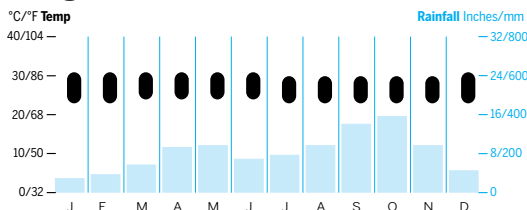
## Why Go?

'Pearl of the Orient', Penang's nickname, conjures romantic images of trishaws pedalling past watermarked Chinese shophouses, blue joss smoke and a sting of chilli in the air; or maybe it's ornate temples, and gold-embroidered saris displayed in shop windows, next to mosques sending a call to the midday prayer. But really, whatever you're imagining, chances are that Penang *is* that reality. Add surprises like slick cafes, antiseptic shopping malls, jungles and white beaches and you'll have an even sharper image.

Historically, Penang was the waterway between Asia's two halves and the outlet to the markets of Europe and the Middle East. As such, the island sits on the juncture of Asia's great kingdoms and colonial empires. Today the culture of this region, forged over decades of colonialism, commercial activity and hosting tourists, is one of Malaysia's most tolerant, cosmopolitan and exciting, especially on the palate.

## When to Go

### George Town



**Jan–Feb** Book accommodation in advance if visiting George Town during Chinese New Year.

**Jun–Jul** Penang's famous durian and other fruit are at their peak during summer.

**Jul** The George Town Festival lights up the entire month with theatre, dance and music.

## History

Little is known of Penang's early history. Chinese seafarers were aware of the island, which they called Betelnut Island, as far back as the 15th century, but it appears to have been uninhabited. It wasn't until the early 1700s that colonists arrived from Sumatra and established settlements at Batu Uban and the area now covered by southern

George Town. The island came under the control of the sultan of Kedah, but in 1771 the sultan signed the first agreement with the British East India Company, handing them trading rights in exchange for military assistance against Siam.

Fifteen years later Captain Francis Light, on behalf of the East India Company, took possession of Penang, which was formally



## Penang Highlights

- 1 Gorging on George Town's seemingly never-ending spread of **hawker food** (p167)
- 2 Getting a virtual crash-course in feng shui at the **Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion** (p159)
- 3 Hiking through jungles to monkey beaches

at **Penang National Park** (p179)

- 4 Learning about the city's architectural heritage from street level on a **walking tour** (p161) of George Town
- 5 Becoming familiar with the contents of your spice rack at the **Tropical Spice Garden** (p177)

- 6 Indulging in a stay at one of George Town's unique **heritage hotels** (p162)
- 7 Enjoying the cool breezes and fantastic views of the island from atop **Penang Hill** (p157)
- 8 Sun-tanning and cocktail drinking at a resort in **Batu Ferringhi** (p176)

signed over in 1791. Light renamed it Prince of Wales Island, as the acquisition date fell on the prince's birthday. Light permitted new arrivals to claim as much land as they could clear and this, together with a duty-free port and an atmosphere of liberal tolerance, quickly attracted settlers from all over Asia. By the turn of the 18th century Penang was home to over 10,000 people.

Penang briefly became the capital of the Straits Settlements (which included Melaka and Singapore) in 1826, until it was superseded by the more thriving Singapore. By the middle of the 19th century, Penang had become a major player in the Chinese opium trade, which provided more than half of the colony's revenue. It was a dangerous, rough-edged place, notorious for its brothels and gambling dens, all run by Chinese secret societies.

There was little action in Penang during WWI but WWII was a different story. When it became evident that the Japanese would attack, Penang's Europeans were immediately evacuated, leaving behind a largely defenceless population. Japan took over the island on 19 December 1941, only 12 days after the attack on Pearl Harbour in the US. The following three and a half years were the darkest of Penang's history.

Things were not the same after the war. The local impression of the invincibility of the British had been irrevocably tainted and the end of British imperialism seemed imminent. The Straits Settlements were dissolved in 1946; Penang became a state of the Federation of Malaya in 1948 and one of independent Malaysia's 13 states in 1963.

With its free-port status withdrawn in 1969, Penang went through several years of decline and high unemployment. Over the next 20 years, the island was able to build itself up as one of the largest electronics manufacturing centres of Asia and is now sometimes dubbed the 'Silicon Valley of the East'. Today, Penang is the only state in

Malaysia that has elected an ethnic Chinese chief minister since independence.

## George Town

04 / POP 740,200

It's full of car exhaust fumes and has a marked lack of footpaths, but George Town is able to woo even the most acute cityphobe with its explosive cultural mishmash in a scene fit for a movie set.

Dodge traffic while strolling past Chinese shophouses where people might be roasting coffee over a fire or sculpting giant incense for a ceremony. Trishaws, sightseeing tourists and locals cruise around the maze of chaotic streets and narrow lanes, past British Raj-era architecture, strings of paper lanterns and retro-chic pubs, boutiques and cafes that wouldn't be out of place in a Western city. Arrive on an empty stomach and graze at will; between the city's outrageous hawker food and a handful of burgeoning modern restaurants this is the food capital of Malaysia.

Though each of the city's districts is distinct, they do overlap; you'll find Chinese temples in Little India and mosques in Chinatown. Along certain streets you'll have your pick of delicious Indian curries, spicy Malay specialities or local Chinese noodle creations all lined up one after the other. And just to confuse you even more, outside the historic centre, Western-style soaring skyscrapers and massive shopping complexes gleam high above.

## 👁 Sights

### CHINATOWN

#### Khoo Kongsi

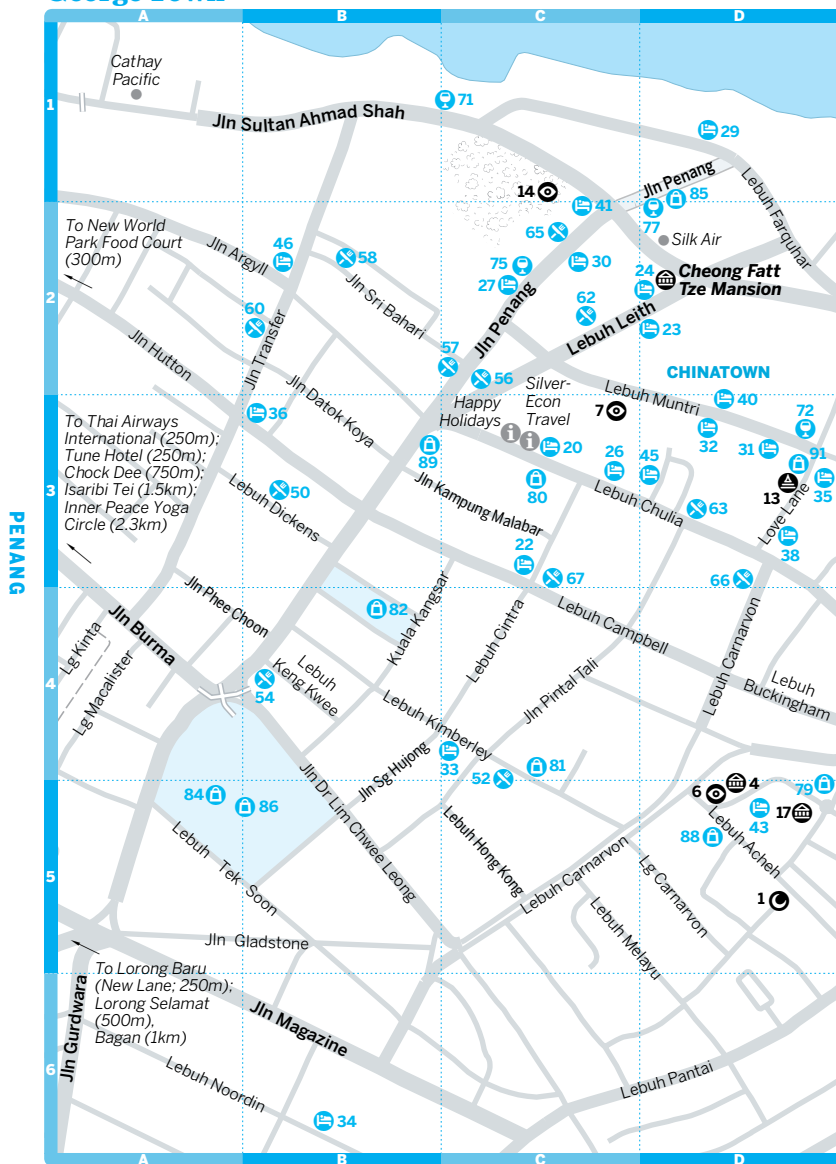
HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p152; [www.khoocongsi.com.my](http://www.khoocongsi.com.my); 18 Cannon Sq; admission adult/child RM10/1; ☎9am-6pm) The *kongsi*, or clanhouse, is a major node of overseas Chinese communities, and the Khoo Kongsi is the most impressive one in Penang.

## ISLAND OR STATE?

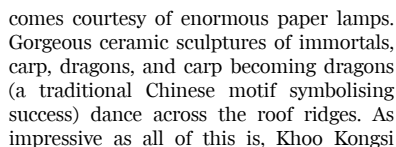
The strip of mainland coast known as Seberang Perai (or Province Wellesley) is the mainland portion of the state that many people don't even know is Penang. The state of Penang is divided both geographically and administratively into two sections: Pulau Penang (Penang Island), a 293 sq km island in the Strait of Melaka, and Seberang Perai, a narrow 760 sq km strip on the peninsular mainland. George Town, on Penang Island, is the state capital, while Butterworth is the largest town in Seberang Perai. Confusingly, the city of George Town is often referred to as just 'Penang' or 'Pinang'.

## George Town



The Khoo, who trace their lineage back 25 generations, are a successful clan, and they're letting the world know. Stone carvings dance across the entrance hall and pavilions, many of which symbolise or are meant to attract good luck and wealth.

Note the Sikh guardian watchman at the entrance. The interior is dominated by incredible murals depicting birthdays, weddings and, most impressively, the 36 celestial guardians (divided into two panels of 18 guardians each). The fiery overhead lighting



was once more ostentatious; the structure caught fire on the night it was completed in 1901, an event put down to divine jealousy. The present *kongsì* dates from 1906. At research time, a hotel was being built on the premises.



## George Town

### 📍 Top Sights

Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion.....	D2
Khoo Kongsi .....	E5
Penang Museum .....	E2
Pinang Peranakan Mansion.....	F4

### 📍 Sights

1 Acheen St Mosque .....	D5
2 Cheah Kongsi .....	E5
3 Clan Jetties .....	F6
4 Dr Sun Yat Sen's Penang Base .....	D5
5 Fort Cornwallis .....	G2
6 George Town World Heritage Inc. Headquarters .....	D5
7 Hainan Temple .....	C3
8 House of Yeap Chor Ee .....	F3
9 Kuan Yin Teng .....	E3
10 Lebuhr Armenia .....	E5
11 Masjid Kapitan Keling .....	E4
12 Padang .....	G2
13 Penang Gelugpa Buddhist Association .....	D3
14 Protestant Cemetery .....	C1
15 Sri Mariamman Temple .....	E4
16 Teochew Temple .....	E4
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### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

18 Nazlina's Spice Station .....	E3
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### 📍 Sleeping

19 23 Love Lane .....	E3
20 Banana Boutique Hotel .....	C3
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24 Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion .....	D2
25 China Tiger .....	F4
26 Chulia Heritage .....	C3
27 Cititel Hotel .....	C2
28 Coffee Atelier .....	E3
29 Eastern & Oriental Hotel .....	D1
30 Hotel Malaysia .....	C2
31 Moon Tree 47 .....	D3
32 Muntri Mews .....	D3
33 New Asia Heritage Hotel .....	C4
34 Noordin Mews .....	B6
35 Old Penang .....	D3
36 Penaga Hotel .....	B3
37 PG Chew Jetty Homestay .....	F6
38 Red Inn .....	D3
Red Inn Court .....	(see 21)
Reggae Penang .....	(see 38)
39 Roommates .....	E3
40 Ryokan .....	D3
41 Segara Ninda .....	C2
42 Seven Terraces .....	E3
43 Straits Collection .....	D5
44 Victoria Inn .....	F5
45 Yeng Keng Hotel .....	D3
46 Yes Hotel .....	B2

### Kuan Yin Teng

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Temple of the Goddess of Mercy; Map p152; Lebuhr Pitt (Jln Masjid Kapital Keling); ☎24hr) This temple is dedicated to Kuan Yin – the goddess of mercy, good fortune, peace and fertility. The temple, which was built in the early 19th century by the first Hokkien and Cantonese settlers in Penang, is not so impressive architecturally, but it's very central and popular with the Chinese community. It seems to be forever swathed in smoke from the outside furnaces where worshippers burn paper money, and from the incense sticks waved around inside. It's a very active place, and Chinese theatre shows take place on the goddess' birthday, celebrated on the 19th day of the second, sixth and ninth lunar months.

The temple was being renovated when we were in town, and there's talk of adding a visitor centre.

### Dr Sun Yat Sen's Penang Base

MUSEUM

(Map p152; 120 Lebuhr Armenian; admission RM3; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Sat) Dr Sun Yat Sen was the leader of the 1911 Chinese revolution, which overturned the Ching dynasty and established China as the first republic in Asia. He lived in George Town with his family for about six months in 1910. This house was not his residence but was the central meeting place for his political party. It was here the 1910 Canton uprising was planned – although unsuccessful, the uprising was a turning point for the revolution's success. Today the structure serves as a museum documenting Dr Sun Yat Sen's time in Penang, and even if you're not interested in history, it is worth a visit simply for a peek inside a stunningly restored antique shophouse.

## Eating

1885 .....	(see 29)
47 Amelie .....	E5
48 China House .....	E5
49 Edelweiss .....	E5
50 Ee Beng Vegetarian Food .....	B3
51 Esplanade Food Centre .....	F1
52 Goh Huat Seng .....	C4
53 Hui Sin Vegetarian Restaurant .....	F4
54 Joo Hooi .....	B4
55 Karai Kudi .....	F4
56 Kashmir .....	C2
57 Kheng Pin .....	C2
58 La Bohème .....	B2
59 Madras New Woodlands Restaurant .....	F4
60 Nasi Padang Minang .....	B2
61 Quay Café .....	G4
62 Red Garden Food Paradise & Night Market .....	C2
63 Sky Hotel .....	D3
64 Sri Ananda Bahwan .....	F4
65 Sup Hameed .....	C2
66 Teksen .....	D3
67 Tho Yuen Restaurant .....	C3
68 Via Pre .....	G4
69 Weld Quay Seafood Restaurant .....	G5

## Drinking

70 B@92 .....	F3
71 Beach Blanket Babylon .....	C1
72 Behind 50 Love Lane .....	D3
73 Canteen .....	E5
Farquhar's Bar .....	(see 29)
74 Jing-Si Books & Cafe .....	G4
75 Soho Free House .....	C2
76 Ten Yee Tea Trading .....	F4
77 Upper Jln Penang Bars .....	D2

## Entertainment

78 QEII .....	G5
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## Shopping

79 88 Armenian Street .....	D5
80 Ban Hin .....	C3
81 Bee Chin Heong .....	C4
China Joe's .....	(see 79)
82 Chowraster Bazaar .....	B4
83 Gallery 29 .....	F4
84 Komtar .....	A5
85 Little Penang Street Market .....	D1
86 Prangin Mall .....	B5
87 Royal Selangor .....	F2
88 Rozanas Batik .....	D5
89 Sam's Batik House .....	B3
90 Springfield .....	E3
91 Unique Penang .....	D3

## Acheen St Mosque

MOSQUE

(Map p152; Lebuah Acheh; ☉7am-7pm) Built in 1808 by a wealthy Arab trader, the Acheen St Mosque was the focal point for the Malay and Arab traders in this quarter – the oldest Malay *kampung* (village) in George Town. It's unusual for its Egyptian-style minaret – most Malay mosques have Moorish minarets.

## Hainan Temple

CHINESE TEMPLE

(Map p152; Lebuah Muntri; ☉9am-6pm) Dedicated to Mar Chor Poh, the patron saint of seafarers, this temple was founded in 1870 but not completed until 1895. A thorough remodelling for its centenary in 1995 refreshed its distinctive swirling dragon pillars and brightened up the ornate carvings.

## COLONIAL DISTRICT & LITTLE INDIA

### Pinang Peranakan Mansion

MUSEUM

(Map p152; www.pinangperanakanmansion.com.my; 29 Lebuah Gereja; admission adult/child RM10/5; ☉9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) This building rivals the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion as the most stunning restored residence in the

city. Every door, wall and archway is carved and often painted in gold leaf; the grand rooms are furnished with majestic wood furniture with intricate mother-of-pearl inlay; and bright-coloured paintings and fascinating black and white photos of the family in regal Chinese dress grace the walls. The house belonged to Chung Keng Quee, a 19th-century merchant, secret society leader and community pillar as well as being one of the wealthiest Baba-Nonyas of that era.

After visiting the house, be sure to also check out Chung Keng Kwi Temple, the adjacent ancestral hall, which by comparison feels decidedly less flashy.

## Penang Museum

MUSEUM

(Map p152; www.penangmuseum.gov.my; Lebuah Farquhar; admission RMI; ☉9am-5pm Sat-Thu) This is one of the best-presented state museums in Malaysia. There are engaging exhibits on the customs and traditions of Penang's various ethnic groups, with photos, documents, costumes, furniture and other well-labelled displays. Upstairs is the history



## UNESCO & GEORGE TOWN

In 2008 the historic centre of George Town was declared a Unesco World Heritage Site for having 'a unique architectural and cultural townscape without parallel anywhere in East and Southeast Asia'. Property values skyrocketed and old buildings, once abandoned, were snatched up by developers hoping to cash in on the ensuing boom. Thankfully, Penang is full of heritage activists, and in general, the city has safeguarded its age-old feel while also reaping the benefits of a facelift.

For information on George Town's World Heritage status, stop by the **George Town World Heritage Inc. Headquarters** (Map p152; [www.gtwhi.com.my](http://www.gtwhi.com.my); 116-118 Lebuh Acheh; ☉8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Thurs, 8am-12.15pm & 2.45-5pm Fri), where you'll find displays and media about the city's architectural heritage. An excellent guide to the city's buildings that also covers many of the main sights is the *George Town World Heritage Site Architectural Walkabout*, available at the Penang Heritage Trust (p174). *Value Your Built Heritage*, available at George Town World Heritage Inc., is an informative and entertaining pocket guide to George Town's shophouse styles.

gallery, with a collection of early 19th-century watercolours by Captain Robert Smith, an engineer with the East India Company, and prints showing landscapes of old Penang. You can also play videos of Penang's many cultural festivals.

### House of Yeap Chor Ee

MUSEUM

(Map p152; [www.houseeyce.com](http://www.houseeyce.com); 4 Lebuh Penang; admission adult/child RM8/free; ☉10am-6pm Tues-Sun) This museum, housed in an exquisitely restored three-storey shophouse mansion, is dedicated to a former resident, itinerant barber-turned-banker Yeap Chor Ee. In addition to family photos and mementos, the museum has interesting exhibits on Chinese immigration to Penang. An audio tour is available for RM10, and admission is free if you dine at Sire, the attached restaurant.

### Clan Jetties

NEIGHBOURHOOD

(Map p152; Pengkalan Weld) During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Pengkalan Weld was the centre of one of the world's most thriving ports and provided plentiful work for the never-ending influx of immigrants. Soon a community of Chinese grew up around the quay, with floating and stilt houses built along rickety docks; these docking and home areas became known as the clan jetties.

Today the clan jetties are low-income areas with a jumble of dilapidated floating houses and planks, and are becoming popular tour bus stops. If you get here sans tour bus, it's a fun place to wander around with docked fishing boats, folks cooking in their homes and kids running around. There is also a homestay option here (p166).

### Fort Cornwallis

HISTORIC SITE

(Map p152; Lebuh Light; admission adult/child RM2/1; ☉9am-7pm) For all its size, this fort isn't particularly impressive; only the outer walls stand, enclosing a rather aged and spare park within. The fort is named for Charles Cornwallis, perhaps best known for surrendering at the Battle of Yorktown to George Washington, effectively ending the American Revolution. It was at the site of the fort that Captain Light first set foot on the virtually uninhabited island in 1786 and established the free port where trade would, he hoped, be lured from Britain's Dutch rivals. Between 1808 and 1810 convict labour replaced the then-wooden building materials with stone. The star-profile shape of the walls allowed for overlapping fields of fire against enemies.

### Protestant Cemetery

CEMETERY

(Map p152; Jln Sultan Ahmad Shah; ☉24hr) Here you'll find the graves of Captain Francis Light and many others, including governors, merchants, sailors and Chinese Christians who fled the Boxer Rebellion in China (a movement opposing Western imperialism and evangelism) only to die of fever in Penang, all under a canopy of magnolia trees. Also here is the tomb of Thomas Le-onowens, the young officer who married Anna – the schoolmistress to the King of Siam made famous by *The King and I*.

### Sri Mariamman Temple

HINDU TEMPLE

(Map p152; Lebuh Pitt (Jln Masjid Kapitan Keling); admission free; ☉7am-7pm) For local Tamils, this temple fulfils the purpose of a Chinese clanhouse; it's a reminder of the motherland and the community bonds forged within the

diaspora. Sri Mariamman was built in 1883 and is George Town's oldest Hindu house of worship. It is a typically south Indian temple, dominated by the *gopuram* (entrance tower).

Penang's Thaipusam (p160) procession begins here, and in October a wooden chariot takes the temple's deity for a spin around the neighbourhood during Vijayadasami festivities.

### Masjid Kapitan Keling

MOSQUE

(Map p152; cnr Lebuhr Buckingham & Lebuhr Pitt (Jln Masjid Kapitan Keling); admission free; ☉7am-7pm) Penang's first Indian Muslim settlers (East India Company troops) built Masjid Kapitan Keling in 1801. The mosque's domes are yellow, in a typically Indian-influenced Islamic style, and it has a single minaret. It looks sublime at sunset. Mosque officials can grant permission to enter.

### GURNEY DRIVE, JALAN BURMA & AROUND

#### Penang Hill

MOUNTAIN

(www.penanghill.gov.my; funicularadult/child RM30/15, museum admission free; ☉6.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 9pm Sat-Sun, funicular every 30 mins during opening hours) The top of Penang Hill, 821m above George Town, is generally about 5°C cooler than at sea level, and provides a cool retreat from the sticky heat below. From the summit there's a spectacular view over the island and across to the mainland. There are some gardens, a simple food court, an exuberantly decorated Hindu temple and a mosque as well as David Brown's (p172), a colonial-style

British restaurant serving everything from beef Wellington to high tea.

On weekends and public holidays lines for the funicular can be horrendously long, with waits of up to 30 minutes, but on weekdays queues are minimal. From the trail near the upper funicular station you can walk the 5.5km to the Botanical Gardens (Moon Gate) in about three hours. The easier 5.1km tarred jeep track from the top also leads to the gardens, just beyond the Moon Gate. From Weld Quay, Komtar or Lebuhr Chulia, you can catch the frequent bus 204 (RM2). A taxi here from the centre of George Town will set you back about RM25.

### Kek Lok Si Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(☉9am-6pm) The 'Temple of Supreme Bliss' is also the largest Buddhist temple in Malaysia and one of the most recognisable buildings in the country. Built by an immigrant Chinese Buddhist in 1890, Kek Lok Si is a cornerstone of the Malay-Chinese community, who provided the funding for its two-decade-long building (and ongoing additions).

To reach the entrance, walk through a maze of souvenir stalls, past a tightly packed turtle pond and murky fish ponds, until you reach **Ban Po Thar** (Ten Thousand Buddhas Pagoda; admission RM2), a seven-tier, 30m-high tower. The design is said to be Burmese at the top, Chinese at the bottom and Thai in between. A **cable car** (one way/return RM4/2; ☉8.30am-5.30pm) whisks you to the highest

## GEORGE TOWN STREET NAMES

Finding your way around George Town can be slightly complicated since many roads have both a Malay and an English name. While many street signs list both, it can still be confusing. In this book we use primarily the Malay name. Here are the two names of some of the main roads:

MALAY	ENGLISH
Lebuhr Gereja	Church St
Jln Masjid Kapitan Keling	Pitt St
Jln Tun Syed Sheh Barakbah	The Esplanade
Lebuhr Pantai	Beach St
Lebuhr Pasar	Market St

To make matters worse, Jln Penang may also be referred to as Jln Pinang or as Penang Rd – but there's also a Penang St, which may also be called Lebuhr Pinang! Similarly, Chulia St is Lebuhr Chulia but there's also a Lorong Chulia, and this confuses even the taxi drivers.

## CLANHOUSES

Between the mid-1800s and the mid-1900s Penang welcomed a huge influx of Chinese immigrants, primarily from China's Fujian province. To help introduce uncles, aunts, cousins, 10th cousins, old neighbourhood buddies and so on to their new home, the Chinese formed clan associations and built clanhouses to create a sense of community, provide lodging and help find employment for newcomers. In addition to functioning as 'embassies' of sorts, clanhouses also served as a deeper social, even spiritual, link between an extended clan, its ancestors and its social obligations.

As time went on, many clan associations became extremely prosperous and their buildings became more ornate. Clans – called 'secret societies' by the British – began to compete with each other over the decadence and number of their temples. Thanks to this rivalry, today's Penang has one of the densest concentrations of clan architecture found outside China. Arguably George Town's most impressive clanhouse is the Khoo Kongsi (p151), while other notable clanhouses include:

**Cheah Kongsi** (Map p152; 8 Lebuhr Armenian; ☎9am-5pm) Besides serving as a temple and assembly hall, this building has also been the registered headquarters of several secret societies. Each society occupied a different portion of the temple, which became a focal point during the 1867 riots. The fighting became so intense that a secret passage existed between here and Khoo Kongsi (p151) for a quick escape.

**Teochew Temple** (Han Jiang Ancestral Temple; Map p152; Lebuhr Chulia; ☎9am-5pm) This 1870 clanhouse was renovated in 2005 by Chinese artisans and features informative displays on the immigration of the eponymous Chinese group.

**Yap Kongsi** (Map p152; 71 Lebuhr Armenian; ☎9am-5pm) The main structure here, today painted a distinct shade of light green and originally built in 1924 in 'Straits Eclectic' style, is not always open to the public; instead, stop in at the adjacent temple, Choo Chay Keong.

level, which is presided over by an awesome 36.5m-high bronze statue of Kuan Yin, goddess of mercy.

There are several other temples in this complex, as well as shops and a **vegetarian restaurant** (mains from RM5; ☎10am-7pm Tue-Sun; ☐).

A taxi here from the centre of George Town starts at about RM25, or you can hop on bus 204 to Air Itam (RM2).

### Botanical Gardens

GARDENS

(Waterfall Rd; ☎5am-8pm) Don't join the throngs of Penang visitors who miss these 30-hectare gardens, which are also known as the Waterfall Gardens after the stream that cascades through from Penang Hill, or the Monkey Gardens for the many long-tailed macaques that scamper around. Don't be tempted to feed them: monkeys do bite, and there's a RM500 fine if you're caught. You'll also see dusky leaf monkeys, black giant squirrels and myriad giant bugs and velvety butterflies, which are all considerably more docile.

Once a granite quarry, the gardens were founded in 1884 by Charles Curtis, a tire-

less British plant lover who collected the original specimens and became the first curator. Today Penangites love their garden and you'll find groups practising t'ai chi, jogging, picnicking and even line-dancing here.

The Botanical Gardens are located about 8km outside of George Town. To get there, take bus 102 (RM2) from Komtar or Weld Quay; a taxi will cost at least RM25.

### FREE P Ramlee House

MUSEUM

(4A Jln P Ramlee; ☎10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun, 10am-noon & 3-5.30pm Fri) This centre consists of three sections dedicated to Malaysia's biggest megastar, P Ramlee. Ramlee was particularly known for his singing; he also acted in and directed 66 films in his lifetime. Opposite the large building that functions as a performing arts centre, a small museum contains artefacts and photos about P Ramlee's life. Adjacent to the museum is Ramlee's birthplace, a humble, thoroughly restored *kampung* house built in 1926.

P Ramlee's music plays as a constant soundtrack throughout the grounds. Although visitors may not be familiar with

his work, the old photos and the house are interesting, and there are a few kitschy souvenirs in the museum's gift shop.

P Ramlee House is about 5km west of George Town; heading south on Jln Perak from Jln Dato Keramat, turn right on Jln P Ramlee – the house is about 300m down this road. A taxi here will cost RM15.

### Suffolk House

HISTORIC BUILDING

([www.suffolkhouse.com.my](http://www.suffolkhouse.com.my); 250 Jln Ayer Itam; admission tour/self-guided RM15/10; ☉10am-6pm) This impressive Georgian-style mansion is built on the site of the original residence of Francis Light, founder of the colony and native of Suffolk, England. Situated on the banks of the Air Itam river, 6.5km west of George Town's centre, it's a grand square building with sweeping verandas, a massive ballroom and a breezy colonial plantation feel.

The renovation of the grounds and exterior were completed in 2007, but the interior has relatively little to see, and a visit is probably best combined with high tea at the attached restaurant. A taxi here will cost around RM15.

## Courses

### Nazlina's Spice Station

COOKING COURSE

(Map p152; ☎012-453 8167; [www.penang-cooking-class.com](http://www.penang-cooking-class.com); 71 Lg Stewart; class RM135; ☉9am-1pm Tue-Sat) The bubbly and enthusiastic Nazlina leads instruction in local dishes including assam laksa and prawn curry. Visit a morning market, grind your own supplies and have fun seeing how much work goes into Malaysian cuisine. Classes are held at the cooking school and, on Wednesdays, at the Eastern & Oriental Hotel (p163).

### Inner Peace Yoga Circle

YOGA

(☎229 2540; [www.innerpeaceyogacircle.com](http://www.innerpeaceyogacircle.com); 293 Jln Burma, 2nd fl; drop-in class RM20) Offers all types of yoga plus retreats and teacher-training programs. Ten per cent of the company's proceeds go to charity. The class schedule is available on the website.

The studio is on Jln Burma about 2.3km northwest of Jln Transfer; a taxi here will cost around RM20.

## Tours

There's a huge variety of self-guided tours of George Town, from food tours to traditional trades to architecture – pick up a pamphlet of the routes at the tourist office or at the Penang Heritage Trust (p174). This NGO

## DON'T MISS

### KIND OF BLUE

The magnificent 38-room, 220-window **Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion** (Map p152; [www.cheongfattzemansion.com](http://www.cheongfattzemansion.com); 14 Lebuhr Leith; admission RM12; ☉tours 11am, 1.30pm & 3pm Mon-Sat) was built in the 1880s, commissioned by Cheong Fatt Tze, a Hakka merchant-trader who left China as a penniless teenager and eventually established a vast financial empire throughout east Asia, earning himself the dual sobriquets 'Rockefeller of the East' and the 'Last Mandarin'.

The mansion, rescued from ruin in the 1990s, blends Eastern and Western designs with louvred windows, art nouveau stained glass and beautiful floor tiles, and is a rare surviving example of the eclectic architectural style preferred by wealthy Straits Chinese of the time. The best way to experience the house, now a boutique hotel, is to stay here; otherwise hour-long guided tours give you a glimpse of the beautiful interior.

conducts a variety of walking tours of central George Town, including the 'Little India Experience' and the 'Heritage Trail'. Both last around three hours and cost RM60 – be sure to book at least a day in advance. The office also has free brochures with details of self-guided walks.

Another option is presented by the **Penang Global Ethic Project** ([www.globalethicpenang.net/webpages/act\\_02b.htm](http://www.globalethicpenang.net/webpages/act_02b.htm)), whose World Religion Walk takes you past the iconography and houses of worship of Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Chinese traditional religion.

There's also a free **tourist shuttle bus** (☉6am-midnight), which runs between the Weld Quay and Komtar, winding its way through the colonial core of George Town. It's a good way to get a quick overview of the town, and you can get on and off at one of 19 stops.

### Heritage Walking Tour

WALKING TOUR

(☎016-440 6823; [jsk\\_27@hotmail.com](mailto:jsk_27@hotmail.com); tours from RM60) Discover George Town by foot with Joann Khaw, a Penang native and heritage expert who also runs feng shui and food tours, among others. Highly recommended.

## BUDDHISM IN PENANG

While Malaysia is officially and predominantly Muslim, the Chinese population has remained mostly Buddhist. As one of Malaysia's most Chinese states, Penang has an uncommonly diverse and burgeoning Buddhist community that embraces not only traditional Chinese Buddhism but also the Thai, Burmese, Sinhalese and Tibetan schools of Buddhist philosophy. In addition to the below, Penang's visit-worthy Buddhist temples include Kuan Yin Teng (p154), the oldest Chinese temple in Penang and the second oldest in the country, and Kek Lok Si Temple (p157) near Penang Hill, Malaysia's biggest Buddhist temple.

**Wat Chayamangkalaram** (Temple of the Reclining Buddha; Lorong Burma; ☉7am-6pm)

The Temple of the Reclining Buddha is a typically Thai temple with its sharp-eaved roofs and ceiling accents; inside it houses a 33m-long reclining Buddha draped in a gold-leafed saffron robe. The temple is located about 2.5km northwest of central George Town; a taxi here will cost RM15.

**Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple** (Lorong Burma; ☉7am-6pm) This is a rare instance of a Burmese Buddhist temple outside Burma (now Myanmar). There's a series of panel paintings on the life of the Buddha lining the walkways, the characters dressed in typical Burmese costume, while inside typically round-eyed, serene-faced Burmese Buddha statues stare out at worshippers. This was Penang's first Buddhist temple, built in 1805; it has been significantly added to over the years. The temple is located about 2.5km northwest of central George Town; a taxi here will cost RM15.

**Wat Buppharam** (8 Perak Rd; ☉8am-6pm) This Thai temple is home to the lifting Buddha, an allegedly 1000-year-old, gold-leaf-encrusted Buddha statue about the size of a well-fed house cat. As a seeker, kneel in front of the statue, pay respects to the figure with a clear mind and then ask, in your mind, the yes or no question you wish to have answered; ask also that you wish for the figure to become light for an affirmative answer. Try to lift the statue. To verify the answer, ask your question again, only this time ask that the statue become heavy. Lift again. When the statue is heavy it won't budge and when it's light it lifts off the platform like a butterfly. Heading northwest on Jln Burma, turn right on Jln Perak about 500m after Hotel 1926. The temple is about 150m down this road.

**Penang Gelugpa Buddhist Association** (Map p152; Love Lane; ☉7am-6pm) This Buddhist temple next to Loo Pun Hong isn't particularly impressive compared with Penang's other religious buildings, but it is unique for being the major representative structure of the Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) school of Buddhism. The Yellow Hats are a Tibetan order, and as such there are some beautiful Tibetan wall hangings in this temple that you'd be hard pressed to find outside a museum.

### Penang Private Tour

GUIDED TOUR

(☎019 529 5959; [www.rasamalaysia.com/penang-private-tour-and-culinary-tour](http://www.rasamalaysia.com/penang-private-tour-and-culinary-tour); tours from RM200) CK Low is a native of Penang who leads a variety of guided food-based tours, as well as more general sights-based tours of the entire island.

### Street Food Excursions & Photography Walks

GUIDED TOUR

([www.eatingasia.typepad.com](http://www.eatingasia.typepad.com); tours from US\$120) The folks behind the food blog EatingAsia offer custom, private food- or photography-centric tours of George Town and beyond.



## Festivals & Events

A good resource for Penang festivals is the state's official tourism website, **Visit Penang** ([www.visitpenang.gov.my](http://www.visitpenang.gov.my)).

### January–April

#### Thaipusam

HINDU

This masochistic festival is celebrated as fervently as in Singapore and KL, but without quite the same crowds. Held in late January/early February.

#### Chinese New Year

CHINESE

Celebrated with particular gusto in George Town. The Khoo Kongsi is done up for the

**START** PENANG MUSEUM  
**FINISH** KHOO KONGSI  
**DISTANCE** 2.25KM  
**DURATION** 3-4 HOURS



## Walking Tour Five Cultures on Two Feet

▶ This walk will give you a glimpse of George Town's cultural grab bag: English, Indian, Malay, Baba-Nonya and Chinese.

Starting at **1 Penang Museum**, head west and then north towards the waterfront, passing the **2 Supreme Court**. Note the statue of James Richardson Logan, advocate for nonwhites during the colonial era. Walk up Lebuhs Duke to the waterfront, then right and right again down Jln Padang Kota Lama past the green **3 padang** (field) and grandiose architecture of the **4 City Hall** and **5 Town Hall**. Proceed left along Lebuhs Light, then right on Lebuhs Penang. A short detour finds the impressive **6 Pinang Peranakan Mansion**, the old digs of one of George Town's great Baba-Nonya merchant barons.

Continue down Lebuhs Penang into **7 Little India** and take a deep breath of all that spice; if it's around lunchtime, refuel with a curry. At Lebuhs Pasar, head right past shops selling milky Bengali sweets, then

left at Lebuhs King to the intersection of **8 Lebuhs King** and **Lebuhs Ah Quee**, a literal example of Penang's cultural crossroads: to your south is a Chinese assembly hall and rows of fading Chinese shopfronts; to your north is a small Indian mosque; and across the street is a large Malaysian cafeteria.

Left onto Lebuhs Ah Quee, right on Jln Pantai, then right on **9 Lebuhs Armenian** (if you want to go off-map to explore side lanes and alleyways, this is the time to do it). The street became a centre for Chinese secret societies and was one of the main fighting stages of the 1867 riots. Stroll past dusty shops till you reach **10 Cheah Kongsi**, home to the oldest Straits Chinese clan association in Penang.

Cross the street to the corner of Lebuhs Pitt and the small 1924 Hokkien clanhouse **11 Yap Kongsi**, its outer altar decorated in symbols from the *Tao Teh Ching*. Left and left onto Cannon Sq brings you to the magnificently ornate **12 Khoo Kongsi**, the most impressive *kongsi* in the city.



## GEORGE TOWN'S STREET ART

Officially sponsored street art is not common in Malaysia, but in George Town it has been embraced by the community and provides a quirky counterpoint to the natural urban beauty of the historic core. In 2010 Penang's state government sponsored a series of cartoon steel art pieces created by the Sculpture At Work studio (<http://sculptureatwork.com>). These artworks, affixed to George Town street walls, detail local customs and heritage with humour.

For the 2012 George Town Festival imaginative murals were commissioned from the young Lithuanian artist Ernest Zacharevic, who combines objects such as bicycles (on Lebuhr Armenian) and telephone booths with his paintings. The art has been a smash hit with visitors constantly lining up to be photographed beside the Lebuhr Armenian piece in particular – when it was vandalised in August 2012, locals quickly cleaned it up again.

Pick up a free map pinpointing the various art sites from George Town Festival's office at 90 Lebuhr Armenian and look at [www.penang-traveltips.com](http://www.penang-traveltips.com) (scroll down and click on George Town Street Art) for full details of Zacharevic's and Sculpture At Work's pieces.

event, and dance troupes and Chinese-opera groups perform all over the city. Held in late January/early February.

### Chap Goh Meh

CHINESE

The 15th day of the new year celebrations, during which local girls throw oranges into the sea. Traditionally the girls would chant 'throw a good orange, get a good husband' while local boys watched and later contacted their dream girl through matchmakers. The new year is also one of the only times to see Baba-Nonya performances of *dondang sayang* (spontaneous and traditional love ballads). Held in February.

### Penang World Music Festival

MUSIC

([www.penangworldmusic.com](http://www.penangworldmusic.com)) Three-day festival featuring a lineup of international and local musicians. Held in March/April.

### May–August

### Penang International Dragon Boat Festival

REGATTA

([www.penangdragonboat.gov.my](http://www.penangdragonboat.gov.my)) A colourful and popular regatta held at Teluk Bahang, featuring traditional dragon boats. Held in late June/early July.

### George Town Festival

PERFORMING ARTS

([www.georgetownfestival.com](http://www.georgetownfestival.com)) An arts and performance festival celebrating the city's Unesco status. Held in July.

### Hungry Ghosts Festival (Phor Thor)

CHINESE

The gates of hell are said to be opened every year on the 15th day of the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar. To appease the hungry ghosts, Penangites set out food

offerings and endeavour to entertain them with puppet shows and streetside Chinese-opera performances. This is a magical time to be in the city. Held in August.

### September–December Lantern Festival

CHINESE

An island-wide festival celebrated by eating moon cakes, the Chinese sweets once used to carry secret messages for underground rebellions in ancient China. Held in mid-September.

### Deepavali

HINDU

The Hindu Festival of Lights is celebrated with music and dancing at venues in Little India. Held in October.

### Pesta Pulau Pinang

CARNIVAL

The annual Penang Island Festival features various cultural events, parades and a fun-fair in George Town. Held in November/December.

### Sleeping

George Town has all the accommodation possibilities you would expect in a big, bustling tourist city, from the grungiest hostels to the swankiest hotels, although it's worth noting that there's not a whole lot to choose from in the midrange. Cacophonous Lebuhr Chulia and quieter Love Lane make up the heart of Penang's backpacker land, crammed with cheap hostels and hotels – it pays to check a few out before parting with your cash. The Unesco-designated 'core zone' is home to several new boutique hotels in heritage buildings.

Be warned that during holidays, most notably Chinese New Year (January/February), hotels tend to fill up very quickly and prices can become ridiculously inflated; if you intend to stay at this time, book well in advance.

## CHINATOWN



### New Asia Heritage Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p152; ☎262 6171; www.newasiahotel.com; 71 Lebuhr Kimberley; r RM88-158; ㊟) As we were told by the gruff-but-friendly manager here, 'The most important thing about this hotel is that everything is the same in every room.' And he's right; the 24 rooms in this clean, well run, comfortable mid-ranger are similarly equipped with TV, air-con, and relatively attractive and functional furniture, although some rooms are slightly larger and have huge balconies. If you favour value rather style, this would be your best option in George Town.



### Moon Tree 47

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p152; ☎264 4021; 47 Lebuhr Muntri; r RM80-120; ㊟) The main structure of this antique shophouse holds three rooms, all sharing a bathroom, while out back are three two-level suites (three additional family rooms were being built at research time). The place has a funky, retro vibe and friendly service, making it perfect for young couples or solo travellers; older travellers or families might be put off by some of the hotel's rather rustic amenities and features.

## Roommates

HOSTEL \$

(Map p152; ☎261 1567; www.roommatespenang.com; 178 Lg Chulia; dm incl breakfast RM28-30; ㊟) This new hostel – allegedly the island's smallest – boasts a young, communal, chummy vibe. There are 16 pod-like dorm beds and a living room-like communal area, but the real highlight is Yen, the friendly owner, who leads guests on free pub-crawls, eating tours and other activities.

## Eastern & Oriental Hotel

LUXURY HOTEL \$\$\$

(E&O; Map p152; ☎222 2000; www.eohotels.com; 10 Lebuhr Farquhar; ste incl breakfast RM350-2480; ㊟) One of the rare hotels in the world where historic opulence has gracefully moved into the present day. Originally established by the Sarkies brothers in 1885, today the hotel comprises of the Heritage Wing, which includes the original domed lobby, and additional wings that date to the

1970s and 2001. A new wing was under construction at the time of research. The suites seamlessly blend European comfort with Malaysian style using hardwood antiques and sumptuous linens; those with a sea view are worth the extra outlay.

## Ryokan

HOSTEL \$

(Map p152; ☎250 0287; www.myryokan.com; 62 Lebuhr Muntri; incl breakfast dm/r RM35-38/136; ㊟) As the name suggests, this new flashpackers has a minimalist – if not particularly Japanese – feel. The dorms, which range from four to six beds, are almost entirely white (except for the pink women's dorms, which also include a large mirror), and the bunk-style beds include a private light and power point. 'Chillax', TV and reading rooms are also stylish and inviting, and come equipped with iPads. The similarly white rooms with en suite bathrooms are comfortable yet overpriced, and lack windows.

## Chulia Heritage

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p152; ☎263 3380; www.chuliaheritagehotel.com; 380 Lebuhr Chulia; r RM90-280; ㊟) The White House would probably be a more apt name for this recently opened hotel. It's housed in an all-white former mansion, with smallish rooms also decked out in virginal white, with of course, white furnishings and amenities. It's all very pure and clean looking, if somewhat lacking in atmosphere (and colour). The cheapest rooms lack windows and share bathrooms.

## Reggae Penang

HOSTEL \$

(Map p152; ☎262 6772; www.reggaehostelsmalaysia.com; 57 Love Lane; dm incl breakfast RM28-30; ㊟) Another brick in Malaysia's Reggae empire, this expansive heritage building has several four- to 12-bed dorm rooms. Beds are double-decker pod style, and have individual lights, power point and free wi-fi. The lobby, outfitted with pool table and coffee shop, feels more like a bar than a hostel. Perfect for the social traveller.

## Yes Hotel

HOTEL \$

(Map p152; ☎229 8880; yeshotel@gmail.com; 60-60A Jln Transfer; r RM69-109; ㊟) One of the few midrange options in central George Town, this hotel provides the necessities in a new-feeling, tidy package, with little – actually no – fuss. Many rooms lack windows and all are RM10 to RM30 more expensive on weekends.

## GEORGE TOWN'S HERITAGE HOTELS

The last couple years have seen a virtual explosion of boutique hotels in central George Town. Many have taken advantage of the city's antique buildings, with rustic interiors often supplemented with modern touches, making the accommodation have some of the more unique and atmospheric we've encountered in Southeast Asia. Here are some of our favourites:

**23 Love Lane** (Map p152; ☎262 1323; [www.23lovelane.com](http://www.23lovelane.com); 23 Love Lane; r incl breakfast 800-1200; 🍷🍷🍷) The 10 rooms here, which are found both in the main structure (a former mansion) or the surrounding buildings (former kitchen and stables), tastefully combine antique furniture and fixtures with modern design touches and artsy accents. There's lots of open spaces and high ceilings to catch the breezes, inviting communal areas, a peaceful aura, and service that complements the casual, homey vibe.

**Straits Collection** (Map p152; ☎262 7299; [www.straitscollection.com](http://www.straitscollection.com); 89-95 Lebuhr Armenia; ste RM450-490; 🍷🍷🍷) If you've ever dreamed of living in a retro-chic restored Chinese shophouse, head here. Each residence is essentially a house (but with no cooking facilities), artfully decorated with regional antiques, bright-coloured cushions and attractive original art. Each is different but all have some sort of unforgettable detail such as wooden Japanese bathtubs or ancient sliding doors.

**Coffee Atelier** (Map p152; ☎261 2261; [www.coffeeatelier.com](http://www.coffeeatelier.com); 47-55 Lg Stewart; ste incl breakfast 380-410; 🍷🍷) Unlike the rather slick heritage hotels you'll find elsewhere in town, the renovation of these two shophouses dating back to 1927 has left them feeling wonderfully rustic, and the peeling paint and quirky original furnishings provide heaps of character. Each house is divided into two units, with a second child-sized bedroom on the first floor, and the ground floor rooms have huge courtyard-style bathrooms.

**Clove Hall** (☎229 0818; [www.clovehall.com](http://www.clovehall.com); 11 Jln Clove Hall; ste incl breakfast RM550-650; 🍷🍷🍷) A white Edwardian Anglo-Malay mansion restored to unpretentious hardwood and tiled elegance, this is the place to go if you want to feel and be treated like a mogul of the early 1900s. In fact, this is the site of the Sarkies brothers' first Penang home. Jln Clove Hall is located off Jln Burma, about 1km north of Jln Transfer; a long walk or a RM15 taxi ride from central George Town.

**Noordin Mews** (Map p152; ☎263 7125; [www.noordinmews.com](http://www.noordinmews.com); 77 Lebuhr Noordin; incl breakfast r/ste RM250/350-550; 🍷🍷🍷) These two restored shophouses boast an attractive 1950s-era feel, down to the antique adverts and retro furniture. A pool and breakfast make the 14 standard rooms here a great deal.

**Penaga Hotel** (Map p152; ☎261 1891; [www.hotelpenaga.com](http://www.hotelpenaga.com); cnr Lg Hutton & Jln Transfer; r/ste RM450-470/750-1080; 🍷🍷🍷) This expansive hotel takes up most of a city block and has three sections: one with a row of two-storey family-friendly minihomes, another with apartment-sized suites and the last with generous but more simple rooms. All are decorated with a magical mix of antiques and some surprising touches like cow-hide rugs, mid-century bright-hued couches and modern art. The stack of amenities include a pool, central gardens and a coffee shop.

**Campbell House** (Map p152; ☎261 8290; [www.campbellhousepenang.com](http://www.campbellhousepenang.com); 106 Lebuhr Campbell; r incl breakfast 270-550; 🍷🍷🍷) This former hotel, dating back to 1903, is seeing a new life as a thoughtful, sumptuous boutique. The European owners have employed their extensive experience in the luxury world to include amenities such as locally sourced, organic toiletries, beautiful Peranakan tiles in the bathrooms, Nespresso machines and high-quality mattresses.

**Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion** (Map p152; ☎262 5289; [www.cheongfattzemansion.com](http://www.cheongfattzemansion.com); 14 Lebuhr Leith; r RM420-800; 🍷🍷🍷) If you were impressed with George Town's famous Blue Mansion, you don't necessarily have to leave. This house museum was one of Penang's first heritage boutique hotels, and although rooms remain large, atmospheric and comfortable, it's worth noting that they're starting to show signs of wear and tear.

**Muntri Mews**

HISTORIC HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p152; 263 5125; www.muntrimews.com; 77 Lebu Muntiri; r RM300-360; 24hr) This building's original owners would no doubt be shocked to learn that their former stable-house (mews) is today an attractive boutique hotel. The nine rooms boast an elegant minimalist vibe, with each room boasting an inviting lounge area and a retro black-and-white tiled bathroom, but conspicuously at this price range, no wardrobe, minibar or safe.

**Hotel Malaysia**

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p152; 263 3311; www.hotelmalaysia.com; My 7 Jln Penang; r incl breakfast RM130-230; 24hr) Crisp sheets, professional service and views over the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion to the Penang Bridge make this place a winner in the bland category and a good deal for the price. A buffet breakfast is included and wi-fi costs RM11.60 per day.

**Yeng Keng Hotel**

HISTORIC HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p152; 262 2177; www.yengkenghotel.com; my; 362 Lebu Chulia; incl breakfast r/stg RM380-440/440-600; 24hr) Smack in the heart of backpacker-land, the Yeng Keng is a re-vamp of a 150-year-old hotel. The 20 rooms are small and come stuffed with slightly cheesy Chinese faux-antique touches; plenty of breezy passageways connect them all. There's a tiny but inviting pool, and the front patio cafe has attracted an upscale local following.

**Banana Boutique Hotel**

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(Map p152; 261 0718; 422 Lebu Chulia; r incl breakfast RM168-469; 24hr) An imposing and recently refurbished mansion with 51 rooms. The lobby boasts a fountain and a rather brash Chinese theme, but the rooms border on the bland end of the interior design spectrum. A better reason to stay here is the convenient location and the popular restaurant/cafe next door serving Western and Malay dishes.

**Segara Ninda**

HISTORIC HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p152; 262 8748; www.segaraninda.com; 20 Jln Penang; r RM70-150; 24hr) This elegant century-old villa was once the town residence of Ku Din Ku Meh, a wealthy timber merchant and colonial administrator. His home has been tastefully renovated, incorporating original features such as the carved wooden ventilation panels, staircase and tiled floors. The 16 rooms are simply but mostly elegantly furnished, and the place boasts a homey atmosphere.

**Cititel Hotel**

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p152; 2370 1188; www.cititelpenang.com; 66 Jln Penang; incl breakfast r/stg RM243-301/649-904; 24hr) Cititel towers over Penang's old town; the views from its large modern rooms are particularly lovely, especially those overlooking the sea. It's brightly lit and always busy, and offers regulation business-traveller comforts, along with a few restaurants. Discounts are normally available.

**Seven Terraces**

LUXURY HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p152; 264 2333; www.7terraces.com; Lg Stewart; ste incl breakfast RM550-2200; 24hr) On the brink of opening during our last visit, this hotel – crafted from a row of seven shop-houses by the people behind Muntri Mews and Noordin Mews – is set to be among the more luxurious places to stay in central George Town. The 18 two-storey suites (including three even larger multiroom 'apartments') have been decorated with an eclectic mix of original antiques, reproductions and contemporary pieces, and surround a central courtyard. A restaurant and bar open to the public face the main street.

**Cathay Hotel**

HOTEL \$

(Map p152; 262 6271; 15 Lebu Leith; r with fan/air-con RM58/76-140; 24hr) There's an unmistakable allure to the spacious colonial building with its light-infused courtyard, high ceilings, latticed windows and grand entrance. But the place is faded, decorated with shabby furniture and with tiles permanently stained from decades of who knows what.

**Old Penang**

HOSTEL \$

(Map p152; 263-8805; www.oldpenang.com; 53 Love Lane; incl breakfast dm/r 23-25/45-90; 24hr) Hardwood floors, white walls, high ceilings and splashes of red paint add a solid-coloured hip vibe to this hostel, otherwise set in a restored pre-WWII house that could easily serve as a set piece in a Maugham or Theroux short story. Rooms are microscopic and offer little in the way of amenities or furniture.

**Red Inn**

HOSTEL \$

(Map p152; 261 3931; www.redinnpenang.com; 55 Love Lane; incl breakfast dm RM30-34, r RM80-90; 24hr) The heritage house and communal areas here – including elevated lounge area – are attractive and inviting, but the private rooms can feel like little more than beds in a closet. Dorms range from two to four beds and, although they're a little cramped, they're clean and have good mattresses.

## COLONIAL DISTRICT & LITTLE INDIA



### China Tiger

HOSTESTAY \$\$\$

(Map p152; ☎012-501 5360, 264 3580; www.china.tiger.info; 25 & 29 Lebu China; apt RM500, all-inclusive homestay RM950; ㊟㊟㊟) You have your choice of experiences here: be completely independent in either of two open-concept self-catering apartments above an art gallery, or live in Chinese heritage elegance in one of the two homestay-style apartments attached to the owner's restored shophouse home. If you can't decide, keep in mind that the latter option involves being pampered and taken around town by your hosts.

### Red Inn Court

HOSTEL \$

(Map p152; ☎261 1144; www.redinnccourt.com; 35B & 35C Lebu Pitt (Jln Masjid Kapitan Keling); incl breakfast dm/r RM28-35/88-108; ㊟㊟㊟) A low-key, newish backpackers with lots of services and communal amenities. Service is friendly and personal, although the lobby has a somewhat commercial 'Tourist Information' office feel.

### Victoria Inn

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p152; ☎262 2278; www.victoriainn.com.my; 278 Lebu Victoria; incl breakfast dm/r RM45/115-135; ㊟㊟) There is a hint of style here, from the faux wood floors, designer coloured paint and arty Penang photos on the walls, but other than that it's really just a standard hotel with good beds, TV, air-con and attached bathrooms.

## Broadway Budget Hotel

HOTEL \$

(Map p152; ☎262 8550; www.broadwaybudget.hotel.com; 35F Lebu Pitt (Jln Masjid Kapitan Keling); r RM50-90; ㊟㊟) The Broadway is a good deal if you want some comfort minus a heck of a lot of atmosphere. It's centrally located, rooms are large (if bland), have en suite bathrooms, and there's in-room wi-fi.

## PG Chew Jetty Homestay

HOSTESTAY \$\$

(Map p152; ☎019-554 4909; pgchomestay@gmail.com; Chew Jetty; r RM80-120; ㊟㊟) For the epitome of a local experience, book one of the basic rooms in this pier-bound home at the edge of George Town's biggest clan jetty. As the name implies, you'll be crashing with a local family. Bathrooms are shared and the noise from grandma's TV is free, although breakfast will set you back an extra RM5.

## PERSERIAN GURNEY, JALAN BURMA & AROUND Mango Tree Place

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎246 2132; www.mangotreeplace.com; 29 Jln Phuah Hin Leong; r incl breakfast RM380-600; ㊟㊟㊟) It takes stepping inside one of the three rather standard-looking shophouses dating back to 1934 to grasp the young, fun vibe of this hotel. Open spaces, primary colours, attractive subtle furniture and natural light establish the feel here. Ground floor rooms have a garden terrace while the upper floor rooms have two bedrooms; all share an expansive communal area equipped with a computer. By the time this has been printed, an additional four rooms will have been completed.

## THE EASTERN & ORIENTAL HOTEL

Originally built in 1884, the stylish E&O (p163) was the archetypal 19th-century colonial grand hotel. It was established by two of the Armenian Sarkies brothers, Tigran and Martin, the most famous hoteliers in the East, who later founded Raffles Hotel in Singapore.

In the 1920s the Sarkies promoted the E&O as the 'Premier Hotel East of Suez'. High-ranking colonial officials and wealthy planters and merchants flocked through its grand lobby, and the E&O was established as a centre for Penang's social elite. Rudyard Kipling, Noel Coward and Somerset Maugham were just some of the famous faces who passed through its doors.

The Sarkies almost closed the E&O when the rent was raised from £200 to £350 a month, but they kept it open largely at the insistence of Arshak Sarkies, the third brother (and a gambler by nature). Arshak's was legendary – some observers said he ran the E&O not to make money, but to entertain. Shortly before his death, Arshak began lavish renovations to the hotel. This expense, coupled with loans to friends that were conveniently forgotten, finally bankrupted the family business in 1931.

In the 1990s the E&O closed and fell into disrepair, but a huge renovation program came to its rescue. In 2001 it once again opened for business, as a luxury, all-suite grand hotel with elegant, spacious rooms decorated in the best of colonial style.

Jln Phuah Hin Leong is located off Jln Burma, about 1km north of Jln Transfer; a long walk or a RM15 taxi ride from central George Town.

### Palanquinn

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(☎227 1088; www.palanquinn.com; 39 Lorong Bangkok; r RM200-350; ㊟㊟㊟) Palanquinn comprises three houses dating back to 1927; its six rooms feel spacious and homey. We particularly liked the huge bathrooms – some with retractable roof – in most units. And you'd be hard-pressed to find a friendlier and more courteous host than Kelvin.

Lorong Bangkok is located just off Jln Burma, about 2.5km north of Jln Transfer; a RM15 taxi ride from central George Town.

### G Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎238 0000; www.ghotel.com.my; 168 Perserian Gurney; r incl breakfast RM450-1248; ㊟㊟㊟) The 303 rooms here are studies in minimalist, cubist cool, collections of geometric form set off by swathes of blocky colour. There's a good crowd of creative and simply successful professionals blowing through the doors, giving the G a vibe that's as Manhattan as it is Malaysia.

The hotel is about 3.5km northwest of central George Town; a taxi here will cost RM15.

### Tune Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎nationwide 03-7962 5888; www.tunehotels.com; 100 Jln Burma; r RM116.80; ㊟㊟㊟) Tune is part of a chain of budget hotels run by AirAsia; its rooms are very clean, decent sized and decorated with an IKEA look broken by multiple AirAsia posters (yet no TV). You'll save a lot by booking ahead, and it's worth noting that the base price here includes no amenities – you pay extra for everything from towels to air-con. The price quoted above is for a same-day booking with most amenities.

Tune Hotel is located on Jln Burma, 250m northwest of Jln Transfer.



## Eating

People come to George Town just to eat. Even if you thought you came here for another reason, your priorities might change dramatically once you start digging into the Indian, Chinese, Malay and various hybrid treats available. Days revolve around where and what to eat, and three meals a day starts to sound depressingly scant. And it's the same for locals, for whom eating out is a daily event.

## CHINATOWN

TOP CHOICE Teksen

CHINESE \$\$

(Map p152; 18 Lebuhr Carnavon; mains from RM10; ☉noon-2.30pm & 6-9pm Wed-Mon) A recent 'branding and uplifting enterprise' has elevated this longstanding restaurant a couple steps up from Penang's typically gritty shop-house restaurants. There's a lengthy menu translated into English but we suggest you do as the locals do and ask the staff for the daily specials – this strategy rewarded us with some great soups, a tasty Malaysian-style stir-fry of morning glory and sambal, and a delicious dish of stir-fried roast pork. Highly recommended.

TOP CHOICE China House

INTERNATIONAL \$\$\$

(Map p152; ☎263 7299; www.chinahouse.com.my; 153 & 155 Lebuhr Pantai) Where do we start? This new complex of three co-joined three heritage buildings features two dining outlets; a cafe/bakery, Kopi C (p172); two galleries; and a bar, Canteen (p171).

**BTB** (mains RM38-68; ☉dinner), the flagship dining venue, does a short but appetising menu of Middle Eastern- and Mediterranean-influenced dishes; think seared sea bass with Ras-el-Hanout spices, cauliflower puree and roasted pumpkin, pine nut and pomegranate dressing.

**Courtyard Cafe** (mains RM12-30; ☉5pm-midnight) does a more casual burger and tapas menu. Whew.

### Kashmir

INDIAN \$\$

(Map p152; Oriental Hotel, 105 Jln Penang; mains RM6.90-54.90; ☉lunch & dinner) Don't be fooled by this hotel-basement restaurant's cheesy 1970s, den-like interior; Kashmir serves some super delicious tandoori. Attentive service, an assertive Indian soundtrack and yes, cocktails, complete the package.

### Sup Hameed

MALAY \$

(Map p152; 48 Jln Penang; mains from RM3; ☉24hr) On the surface, this is very much your typical *nasi kandar* shop found all over Malaysia, and we don't recommend eating here during the day. But come night, Hameed sets out tables on the street and serves his incredibly rich soups (try *sup kambing* – goat soup), served with slices of white bread.

### Goh Huat Seng

CHINESE \$\$

(Map p152; 59A Lebuhr Kimberley; hotpot RM40-80; ☉5-9.30pm) With five decades under its belt, Goh Huat Seng continues to serve Teo



Chew-style hotpot the old way: in charcoal-fired steamboats. Get some friends together and enjoy some communal dipping or, if you've got the language skills, order classic Teo Chew dishes from the restaurant's Chinese-language menu on the wall.

### Tho Yuen Restaurant

CHINESE \$

(Map p152; 92 Lebu Campbell; dim sum RM1.5; ☺6am-3pm Wed-Mon) Our favourite place for dim sum. It's packed with newspaper-reading loners and chattering groups of locals all morning long, but you can usually squeeze in somewhere – as long as you arrive early. Servers speak minimal English but do their best to explain the contents of their carts.

### Sky Hotel

CHINESE \$

(Map p152; Lebu Chulia; mains from RM6; ☺lunch) It's incredible that this gem sits in the middle of the greatest concentration of travelers in George Town, yet is somehow almost exclusively patronised (in enthusiastic numbers) by locals. It is incumbent on you to try the *char stew* (barbequed pork), *siew bak* (pork belly), *siew cheong* (honey-sweetened pork) and roast duck.

### Joo Hooi

HAWKER \$

(Map p152; Cnr Jln Penang & Lebu Keng Kwee; mains from RM3; ☺11am-6pm) The hawker centre equivalent of one-stop shopping, this cafe-style joint has all of Penang's best dishes in one location: laksa, *rojak*, *char kway teow*, *lor bak* (deep-fried meats served with dipping sauces), *cendol* (shaved ice with palm sugar, coconut milk and jellies) and fresh fruit juices.

### La Bohème

FRENCH \$

(Map p152; 42 Jln Sri Bahari; pastries & desserts RM3.5-10, mains RM12-21; ☺10am-6pm Mon-Sat) If you're feeling like a retro-themed tea hall, this casual place serves French pastries and light meals courtesy of a French pastry chef and his Malaysian wife. Think quiches, croissants and crème brûlée.

### Amelie

WESTERN \$\$

(Map p152; 6 Lebu Armenian; mains RM16-23; ☺9am-5pm Tues-Fri, to 7pm Sat-Sun) Pint-sized Amelie does a short but revolving menu of pasta standards – think spaghetti carbonara or gnocchi with sausage – supplemented with a few sandwiches and salads. It's all hearty, homey and tasty, if not entirely creative.

### Kheng Pin

HAWKER \$

(Map p152; 80 Jln Penang; mains from RM4; ☺7am-3pm Tue-Sun) Locals swear by the specialities at this aged hawker joint, most famously *lor bak* (deep-fried meats dipped in sauce) and Hainan chicken rice (steamed chicken with broth and rice), one of the great fast foods of East Asia.

### Nasi Padang Minang

INDONESIAN \$

(Map p152; 92 Jln Transfer; mains from RM4; ☺lunch) Buffet-style Indonesian curries, stir-fries, soups, salads and grilled dishes.

### Edelweiss

SWISS \$\$

(Map p152; 38 Lebu Armenian; mains RM18-39.50; ☺11am-10pm Tues-Sun) Items like currywurst and bratwurst carry a distinct German accent, while fondue and rösti (Swiss-style potato pancakes) give Edelweiss its Swiss twang. The antique-filled dining room is a delight, and there's a small selection of pricey imported beers.

### Ee Beng

#### Vegetarian Food

CHINESE, VEGETARIAN \$

(Map p152; 20 Lebu Dickens; meals around RM5; ☺breakfast, lunch & dinner; ♻) Popular self-service place for cheap, mostly vegetarian food of the tofu and green vegetables variety.

## COLONIAL DISTRICT & LITTLE INDIA

### Weld Quay Seafood Restaurant

CHINESE \$\$

(Tree Shade Seafood Restaurant; Map p152; Pengkalan Weld; mains RM10-50; ☺lunch & dinner Thur-Tues) Named for its location under a giant tree, this is where locals head for cheap and tasty seafood. Pick your aquatic protein from the trays out front, and the staff will fry, steam, soup or grill it up for you. Located directly across from the Weld Quay bus terminal.

### Madras New Woodlands Restaurant

INDIAN, VEGETARIAN \$

(Map p152; 60 Lebu Penang; set lunch RM5.25, mains from RM1.50; ☺8.30am-10pm; ♻) It draws you in with its display of Indian sweets outside (try the *halwa*), but once you experience the food you might not have room for dessert. Tasty banana-leaf meals and north Indian specialities are the mainstays, as well as the thickest mango lassi in town. The daily set lunch for RM5.25 might be Penang's greatest food bargain.

### Via Pre

ITALIAN \$\$

(Map p152; www.via-pre.com; 5 Pengkalan Weld; mains RM6.90-54.90; ☺lunch & dinner) This KL-based Italian staple has imported a

## BEE YINN LOW: FOOD WRITER

Bee is a native of Penang, a best-selling author, and the blogger behind popular cooking website [Rasa Malaysia](http://www.rasamalaysia.com) ([www.rasamalaysia.com](http://www.rasamalaysia.com)).

**How is the food of Penang different than elsewhere in Malaysia?** Penang is predominantly Chinese, so you will find myriad Chinese dishes. It's a Straits settlement, so one can find delicious Nonya food, much of which is influenced by Thai food. And the surrounding sea means that fresh seafood such as shrimp, cockles and fish are widely used.

**What are a few dishes visitors to Penang should make a point of seeking out?** *Char kway teow*, flat rice noodles fried with prawn, cockles and Chinese sausage; Hokkien mee, a noodle dish with a rich, shrimp-based broth, and topped with shrimp, pork, and fried shallots; *assam laksa*, rice noodles in a spicy and sour fish broth, garnished with herbs and vegetables; and curry mee, noodles in spicy and aromatic curry broth with fried tofu puffs and cockles.

**Which hawker centre should visitors not miss?** In the evening, head to New Lane (also known as Lorong Baru) and try the street food sold by the hawkers in the area.

**And what's a good all-around restaurant?** I love Hai Boey (p182), a modest seafood restaurant by the beach at Teluk Kumbar. The food is good and you can't beat the views, especially during sunset.

**Any particular fruit or produce visitors shouldn't miss?** Penang offers some of the best durian in the region; it's absolutely creamy, rich, and sweet.

**Is there any sort of drink particularly associated with Penang?** Nutmeg juice. You can get it at any coffee shop.

previously unknown level of sophistication to sleepy George Town. Expect traditional Italian dishes, tasty pizzas and superb desserts in a beautifully refurbished warehouse overlooking the mainland.

**Quay Café**

ASIAN, VEGETARIAN \$

(Map p152; 2 Gat Lebuhraya; mains RM5-15; ☺lunch Mon-Sat; ☑) Slick cafeteria serving Asian-style meat-free dishes. Expect set meals, an emphasis on noodle dishes, and fresh juices and herbal teas.

**Sri Ananda Bahwan**

INDIAN \$

(Map p152; 55 Lebuhraya; mains from RM3; ☺breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☑) Busy and tidy *nasi kandar*-type restaurant, seemingly forever full of chatting locals, which serves up tandoori chicken, *roti canai* and *murta-bak* (*roti canai* filled with meat or vegetables). There's also an air-con dining hall.

**Karai Kudi**

INDIAN \$

(Map p152; 20 Lebuhraya; set meals from RM6.50, mains RM4-20; ☺11am-11pm; ☑) This outrageously tasty air-con place specialises in southern Indian Tamil Chettinad cuisine but also serves tandoori at dinner. Banana-leaf meals are huge and some sets include ice cream for dessert.

**Hui Sin****Vegetarian Restaurant** CHINESE, VEGETARIAN \$

(Map p152; 11 Lebuhraya; meals around RM4; ☺8am-4pm Mon-Sat; ☑) This excellent-value buffet restaurant is the place to go for a filling meat-free lunch. Take what you want from the selection of vegetables, curries and beancurd on offer, and you'll be charged accordingly.

**PERSIARAN GURNEY, JALAN BURMA & AROUND****Sea Pearl Lagoon Cafe** CHINESE \$\$

(☎899 0375; off Jln Tanjong Tokong; dishes from RM8; ☺11am-10pm Thurs-Tue) On the surface, this somewhat gritty open-air place isn't much different than many of George Town's hawker cafes. But the view looking out over the North Channel and the food – salt roasted prawns, *ikan bakar* (fish grilled with sambal) and excellent satay – combine to make it one of our favourite places to eat outside the city centre.

Sea Pearl Lagoon is located 7km north-west of George Town, in Tanjong Tokong next to Thai Pak Koong Temple; a taxi here from central George Town will set you back about RM25.

**Nyonya Breeze**

NONYA \$\$

(50 Lorong Abu Siti; mains RM8.60-22; ☺lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) Considered by many local

## HAWKER-STALL HEAVEN

Penang's reputation as a must-see destination hinges greatly on its food, and the best the city has to offer is served at hawker stalls and food courts. Not eating at a stall in George Town is like missing the Louvre in Paris – you simply have to do it.

Hawker stall vendors run flexible schedules, so don't be surprised if one isn't there during your visit. Most importantly, avoid Mondays and Thursdays when many vendors tend to stay at home. Dishes generally fall between RM3 and RM10.

**Lorong Baru (New Lane)** (New Lane, cnr Jln Macalister & Lg Baru; ☺dinner) If you ask locals where their favourite hawker stalls are, after listing a few far-flung places, they'll always mention this night-time street extravaganza, not for a particular stall but because all the food is reliably good. There's an emphasis on Chinese-style noodle dishes, and we particularly liked the *char koay kak* stall, which in addition to spicy fried rice cakes with seafood, also does great *otak otak* (a steamed fish curry). Lorong Baru intersects with Jln Macalister, about 250m northwest of the intersection with Jln Penang.

**Gurney Drive** (Persiaran Gurney; ☺dinner) Penang's most famous food area sits amidst modern high-rises bordered by the sea. It's posh for a hawker area so the food is a bit pricier than elsewhere, but you'll find absolutely everything from Malay to Western. It's particularly known for its laksa stalls (try stall 11). For the best *rojak* head to the famous Ah Chye. Gurney Drive is located about 3km west of George Town near Gurney Plaza mall; a taxi here will set you back RM15.

**Esplanade Food Centre** (Map p152; Jln Tun Syed Sheh Barakbah; ☺dinner) You can't beat the seaside setting of this food centre, which is nestled right in the heart of George Town's colonial district. One side is called 'Islam' and serves halal Malay food, and the other is called 'Cina' and serves Chinese and Malay specialties, including the absolutely delicious *rojak* at Rojak Ho Wei Jeng. Esplanade is often very quiet on Monday and Wednesday.

**Padang Brown Food Court** (Jln Pantai; ☺lunch & dinner Fri-Wed) Everyone in town knows that this is the spot for delectable *popiah* (spring rolls), although the *won ton mee* (egg noodles served with pork dumplings or sliced roast pork) and *bubur caca* (dessert porridge made with coconut milk and banana) is another good reason to try the food in this area. In the afternoons try the *yong tau foo* (clear Chinese soup with fish balls, lettuce, crab sticks, cuttlefish and more). Padang Brown is about 1.5km west of the centre of George Town, off Jln Dato Keramat; a taxi here will cost about RM15.

**Lorong Selamat** (cnr Jln Macalister & Lg Selamat; ☺dinner Sat-Thurs) The south end of Lorong Selamat is the place to go for the city's most famous *char kway teow*, but you'll also find lip-smacking *won ton mee* and other Chinese Penang favourites. Lorong Baru intersects with Jln Macalister about 500m northwest of Jln Penang.

**New World Park Food Court** (cnr Jln Hutton & Lg Swatow; ☺11am-7pm) Every stall serves something different at this ultramodern, covered food court with mist-blowing fans and shiny industrial decor. The *ais kacang* (shaved-ice dessert with syrup, jellies, beans and sometimes even corn on top) here gets particularly good reviews. There are also a number of fast-food-feeling restaurants in this complex including Nonya and Indian. New World is off Jln Hutton, about 400m northwest of Jln Transfer.

**Red Garden Food Paradise & Night Market** (Map p152; Lebuhraya; ☺lunch & dinner) This place has a convenient location in the heart of Chinatown and offers a wide selection of food, including most local specialties. It's a good choice for families looking for something easy and has lots of options for fussy eaters.

Peranakans to serve the best Nonya food, this cafeteria-like place makes you feel at home while you sample exquisite specialties like *kari kapitan* (chicken curry with coconut milk and kaffir lime) and *sambal goreng* (prawns, eggplant and cashews in

chilli sauce). There's lots of daily specials and weekday lunchtime set meals (RM13.90).

Lorong Abu Siti intersects with Jln Burma, about 500m northwest of Jln Transfer.

## Isaribi Tei

JAPANESE \$\$

(cnr Jln Burma & Jln Chow Thye; set menu RM22-40; ☺lunch & dinner) Fresh, expertly prepared sushi is served in a vine-covered hardwood setting that looks more like the heart of the jungle than the middle of the city. Beyond sushi, Japanese-style grilled-fish set menus are the speciality with salmon, cod, trout and much more on offer.

Isaribi Tei is 1.5km northwest of Jln Transfer; a taxi here will set you back about RM15.

## Chock Dee

THAI \$\$

(231D Jln Burma; mains RM13-50; ☺lunch & dinner Sun-Tues) Chock Dee has garnered an impressive reputation among local eaters. Menu highlights include squid in lemon sauce and *hor mok*, Thai-style *otak otak* (steamed curry). Chock Dee is on Jln Burma about 750m northwest of Jln Transfer; a taxi here will cost around RM12.



## Drinking & Entertainment

Between the largely hotel-based bars and some rather commercial-feeling pubs and clubs, Penang doesn't have much of a sophisticated bar scene. That said, there are a few fun places for a night out.



## Canteen

BAR

(Map p152; www.chinahouse.com.my; 183B Lebu Victoria, China House; ☺5pm-midnight) This is about as close as George Town comes to a hipster bar – minus the pretension. Canteen has an inviting artsy/warehouse vibe, there's live music from Thursday to Sunday, and great bar snacks available every night. Canteen is also accessible via China House's entrance on Lebu Pantai.



## B@92

BAR

(Map p152; 92 Lebu Gereja; ☺noon-late) Need a drinking buddy while in town? Resident Serbian Aleksandar is more than happy to oblige. Food, an eclectic music selection and friendly regulars make B@92 the kind of bar you wish you could throw in your backpack and carry with you across Southeast Asia. Bring this guidebook, or ask about the origin of Aleks's skull ring, and you might just get a discount.

## That Little Wine Bar

BAR

(www.thatlittlewinebar.com; 54 Jln Chow Thye; ☺5pm-midnight Mon-Sat) A cosy yet chic bar and lounge run by a German chef and his wife. Enjoy a selection of wine – glasses start at RM20 – and champagne cocktails at this

cosy yet chic bar and lounge. Accompany your drink with tapas (RM18 to RM60) and slightly heavier mains (RM28 to RM65).

Jln Chow Thye is located off Jln Burma, about 1.5km northwest of Jln Transfer; a taxi here will set you back about RM15.

## Beach Blanket Babylon

BAR

(Map p152; 32 Jln Sultan Ahmad Shah; ☺11am-1am Mon-Fri, to 2am Sat-Sun) The open-air setting and relaxed vibe contrast with the rather formal restaurant this bar is linked to. Saturday night is men's night at this gay-friendly spot, with half price on standard pours and a discount on beer for males.

## Farquhar's Bar

BAR

(Map p152; Eastern & Oriental Hotel, 10 Lebu Farquhar; ☺11am-1am) Colonial British-style bar inside the E&O Hotel, serving beer, traditional pub food and cocktails; try its signature drink, the Eastern & Oriental sling (RM38) brought to you by a white-coated barman. There's live music Thursday to Saturday, and Happy Hour between 5pm and 8pm.

## Behind 50 Love Lane

BAR

(Map p152; Lebu Muntri; ☺6pm-1am Wed-Mon) Pocket-sized, retro-themed bar that draws a largely local following, despite being close to the backpacker strip. There's a classic rock soundtrack and a short menu of Western-style comfort dishes (RM14.90 to RM18.90).

## Bagan Bar

BAR

(Macalister Mansion, 228 Jln Macalister; ☺5pm-1am) This sleek, dark, velvet-coated den is probably the most sophisticated bar in town – a fact seemingly verified by the rather strict dress code (no shorts, t-shirts or sandals). There's live music from 9pm.

## Upper Jln Penang Bars

BAR

(Map p152; Jln Penang; ☺8pm-2am) This strip of road at the far northern end of Jln Penang is George Town's rather commercial-feeling entertainment strip. There's a row of about 10 open-air and air-con bars, but most flock to the mega-clubs: **Slippery Senioritas** offers live music shows that are as corny as the bar's name suggests, although it's popular and all in good fun; while **Voodoo** offers much of the same in a slightly more sophisticated package.

## Soho Free House

BAR

(Map p152; 50 Jln Penang; ☺noon-midnight) This place starts rocking out early with cheesy '80s hits and a Chinese clientele who nosh

bangers and mash and swirl pints with the handful of expats.

### QEII

BAR, CLUB

(Map p152; 8 Pengkalan Weld; ☎6pm-1am Mon-Tues, 1pm-2am Wed-Sat, 3pm-2am Sun) QEII, with 360-degree views of the Strait of Melaka, serves passable pizza and better ambience; on Friday and Saturday nights, QEII transforms into a dance club.

### Golden Screen Cinemas

CINEMA

(www.gsc.com.my; Gurney Plaza, Persiaran Gurney) Penang's biggest cinema complex with 12 screens and THX sound is in the Gurney Plaza shopping complex.



## Shopping

### Unique Penang

ARTS & CRAFTS

(Map p152; www.uniquepenang.com; 62 Love Lane; ☎5pm-midnight Sun-Fri & 9pm-midnight Sat) This

shophouse gallery features the work of the friendly young owners, Clovis and Joey, as well as the colourful paintings of the latter's young art students. As the couple point out, paintings are notoriously hard to squeeze in a backpack, so nearly all of the gallery's art is available in postcard size.

### Rozanas Batik

ARTS & CRAFTS

(Map p152; 81B Lebu Acheh; ☎11.30am-6.30pm) Tiny shop featuring the owner's beautiful handmade batik items. If you want to learn more, take a walk-in two-hour class in the adjacent studio (RM50 to RM 75).

### Springsfield

ARTS & CRAFTS

(Map p152; 8 Muda Lane; ☎9am-6pm) Pick up some hand-painted Peranakan tiles (made in Vietnam) at this boutique in a restored shophouse. There's a few other interesting local-style knick-knacks available, and the profits go to help stray animals.

## HI, TEA!

Penang's English, Chinese and Indian legacies have left an appreciation for tea that remains strong today. More recent immigrants to George Town have imported an enviable Western-style cafe culture.

**Suffolk House** (www.suffolkhouse.com.my; 250 Jln Ayer Itam; high tea for two RM68; ☎2.30pm-6pm) For the ultimate English tea experience, head to this 200-year-old Georgian-style mansion, where high tea, featuring scones and cucumber sandwiches, can be taken inside or in the garden. Suffolk House is located about 6.5km west of George Town; a taxi here will cost around RM15.

**Ten Yee Tea Trading** (Map p152; 33 Lebu Pantai; ☎9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Fine teas are on sale here but the fun part is deciding which to buy. For RM20 you choose a tea (which you can share with up to five people), then a specialist shows you how to prepare it the proper Chinese way. A full explanation of all the different brews is given alongside the tea drinking.

**Jing-Si Books & Cafe** (Map p152; 31 Lebu Pantai; drinks RM5; ☎noon-8pm) A stylish oasis of spiritual calm, this outlet for a Taiwanese Buddhist group's teachings is a wonderful place to revive in hushed surroundings over a pot of interesting teas or coffees – all of which go for the reasonable price of RM5.

**Kopi C** (www.chinahouse.com.my; China House, 153 & 155 Lebu Pantai; mains from RM10; ☎9am-midnight) Located in the rambling China House complex, this cafe/bakery does good coffee and some of the best pastries and ice creams (on a good day 16 of the latter – we like the salted caramel) we've encountered in Southeast Asia.

**1885** (Map p152; ☎261 8333; Eastern & Oriental Hotel, 10 Lebu Farquhar; English afternoon tea RM52; ☎2-5pm) The E&O Hotel's main restaurant offers a daily English afternoon tea with scones, smoked salmon and, of course, cucumber sandwiches.

**Café 55** (www.coffeeatelier.com; Coffee Atelier, 47-55 Lorong Stewart; coffee drinks from RM8; ☎8.30am-5pm Tue-Sun) Located in what was formerly a coffee roaster (ask to see the former roasting oven out back), this sophisticated cafe, with attached gallery, does both new-school and old-school coffee drinks.

**David Brown's** (www.penanghillco.com.my; Penang Hill; afternoon tea RM34-78; ☎9am-6pm) Located at the top of Penang Hill, this is yet another atmospheric destination for colonial-style high tea.

**China Joe's**

ARTS &amp; CRAFTS

(Map p152; 95 Lebuhr Armenian; ☎9am-7pm) Ladies will love the fabrics – both new and antique – boxes, stationery, bags and other classy Asian bric-a-brac. There's a gallery upstairs and an adjacent tea salon.

**88 Armenian Street**

ARTS &amp; CRAFTS

(Map p152; 88 Lebuhr Armenian; ☎10am-6pm Mon-Sat) This address houses three floors of art: the ground floor showcases the exquisite fused-glass creations of Penang artist Wong Keng Fuan, the 1st floor is the showroom for Jonathan Yun's sculptural jewellery, and the 2nd floor houses Howard Tan's Penang-centric photos.

**Gallery 29**

ARTS &amp; CRAFTS

(Map p152; www.rebeccaduckett.com; 29 Lebuhr China; ☎9am-6pm) Rebecca Duckett's gallery shows off her modern yet traditionally inspired art in colourful splashes. There is also a good selection of books on local topics, and vintage items and crafts on offer.

**Straits Quay**

MALL

(www.straitsquay.com; ☎10.30am-10pm) This is Penang's newest, largest and flashiest mall, built on reclaimed land just outside of the city centre. In addition to the usual mall suspects, **Séntuhan** (www.sentuhan.com; ☎10.30am-10pm) sells a unique selection of crafts and housewares made by disadvantaged Malaysian women, and **Royal Selangor** (Map p152; ☎10.30am-10pm) has a visitor centre that offers a course in making pewter sculptures daily at 11am, 2.30pm and 4.30pm (per person RM60). If you're not into shopping, it's also home to the **Performing Arts Centre of Penang** (www.penangpac.org) and there are a couple decent restaurants and bars strategically positioned to soak up the sea breezes.

Straits Quay is located about 7km north-west of George Town; buses 101 and 104 pass the mall (RM4), and a taxi here will cost about RM20. At research time, there were plans underway to have a free shuttle boat from the Eastern & Oriental Hotel (p163) to the mall.

**Ban Hin**

ANTIQUES

(Map p152; Lebuhr Chulia; ☎9am-7pm) This old shophouse is literally stuffed full of old adverts, packages, tins, ceramics, toys and other quasi-antiques. Located roughly across from Banana Boutique Hotel.

**LITTLE PENANG STREET MARKET**

On the last Sunday of every month, the pedestrian section of upper Jln Penang hosts the **Little Penang Street Market** (Map p152; www.littlepenang.com.my; ☎10am-5pm), selling Malaysian arts and crafts such as dolls, batik, pottery, T-shirts and painted tiles, as well as items like bottled chutney.

**Bee Chin Heong**

ANTIQUES

(Map p152; 58 Lebuhr Kimberley; ☎10am-8.30pm) This interesting outlet sells a colourful, bewildering assortment of religious statues, furniture and temple supplies; if you're after a huge Chinese couch, a household shrine or have RM55,000 to spend on a 2m-tall carved-wood Buddha, this is the place to come. Even if you're not buying, it's still worth a look round.

**Gurney Plaza**

MALL

(Persiaran Gurney; ☎10am-10pm) Penang's classiest mall, with international chain stores like the Body Shop and Esprit. Mac users will find an Apple store here, and there's a massive music store, bookstore and several electronics outlets. There's also a mini theme park, fitness centre and a health spa. Gurney Drive is located about 3km west of George Town; a taxi here will set you back RM15.

**Chowraster Bazaar**

MARKET

(Map p152; Jln Penang; ☎8am-6pm) This sweaty old market hall is where to go for a frenetic, souk-like experience. It's full of food stalls and vendors selling headscarves, batik shirts, fabrics and *kebaya* (blouses worn over a sarong).

**Komtar**

MALL

(Map p152; Jln Penang; ☎10am-10pm) Penang's oldest mall is housed in a 64-storey landmark tower (at one time the tallest building in Malaysia). There are hundreds of shops in a place with the feel of an ageing bazaar. Here you'll find everything from clothes, shoes and electronics to everyday goods, and you can take an elevator ride (RM5) from the ground floor to the 58th floor where there's a viewing area with views over the island. Adjacent **Prangin Mall** (Map p152; ☎10am-10pm) has a cinema showing the odd Western blockbuster; **1st Avenue** (☎10am-10pm)



is another mall with similarly international shops.

### Sam's Batik House

CLOTHING

(Map p152; 159 Jln Penang; ☎8am-7pm) Nicknamed 'Ali Baba's Cave', this deep shop of silky and cottony goodness is the best place in town to buy sarongs, batik shirts and Indian fashions. Girls can go nuts over hand-embroidered dresses while the guys try on Bollywood shirts.

## i Information

### Immigration Offices

**Immigration Office** (☎261 5122; 29A Lebuhraya Pantai; ☎7.30am-3.45pm Mon-Fri) Visa extensions are available here.

### Internet Access

Most lodging options offer wi-fi and many also have a computer terminal for guest use. Wi-fi is also widely available at restaurants, cafes and in shopping malls. Internet cafes have lifespans slightly longer than a housefly, and loads of them can be found along Lebuhraya Chulia.

### Medical Services

**Hospital Pulau Pinang** (☎229 3333; www.hpp.moh.gov.my; Jln Hospital)

**Loh Guan Lye Specialist Centre** (☎228 8501; www.lohguanlye.com; 19 Jln Logan)

**Penang Adventist Hospital** (☎222 7200; www.pah.com.my; 465 Jln Burma)

### Money

Branches of major banks are on Lebuhraya Pantai and Lebuhraya Downing near the main post office, and most have 24-hour ATMs. At the northwestern end of Lebuhraya Chulia there are numerous

moneychangers open longer hours than banks and with more competitive rates.

## Post

**Post Office** (Lebuhraya Downing; ☎8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat)

## Tourist Information

**Penang Heritage Trust** (PHT; ☎264 2631; www.pht.org.my; 26 Lebuhraya Pantai; ☎9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Information on the history of Penang, conservation projects and heritage walking trails.

**Penang Tourist Guide Association** (☎261 4461; www.ptga.my) Call or check the website to find a local tour guide.

**Tourism Malaysia** (☎262 0066; www.tourism.gov.my; 10 Jln Tun Syed Sheh Barakbah; ☎8am-5pm Mon-Fri) George Town's main tourist information office gives out maps and bus schedules.

## Travel Agencies

Most, but not all, of the agencies in George Town are trustworthy. Reliable operators that many travellers use to purchase discounted airline tickets:

**Happy Holidays** (☎262 9222; 432 Lebuhraya Chulia; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat)

**Silver-Econ Travel** (☎262 9882; 436 Lebuhraya Chulia; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat)

## Websites

**www.visitpenang.gov.my** Official website of state tourism entity; great for details on festivals and events.

**www.igeorgetownpenang.com** An excellent newsletter aimed at Penang residents; gives good under-the-skin information on George Town.

**www.tourismpenang.gov.my** Details of sights and restaurants in Penang.

## GETTING TO & FROM BUTTERWORTH

Butterworth, the city on the mainland bit of Penang (known as Sebarang Perai), is home to Penang's main train station and is the departure point for ferries to Penang Island. Unless you're taking the train or your bus has pulled into Butterworth's busy bus station from elsewhere, you'll probably not need to spend any time here.

The cheapest way to get between Butterworth and George Town is via the **ferry** (per adult/car RM1.20/7.70; ☎5.30am-1am); the terminal is linked by walkway to Butterworth's bus and train stations. Ferries take passengers and cars every 10 minutes from 5.30 to 9.30pm, every 20 minutes until 11.15pm, and hourly after that until 1am. The journey takes 10 minutes and fares are charged only for the journey from Butterworth to Penang; returning to the mainland is free.

If you choose to take a taxi to/from Butterworth (approximately RM50), you'll cross the 13.5km Penang Bridge, one of the longest bridges in the world. There's a RM7 toll payable at the toll plaza on the mainland, but no charge to return.

At research time, construction was well underway on a second bridge linking Batu Maung at the southeastern tip of the island to Batu Kawan on the mainland. It should be completed by the time you're reading this.

**www.penangmonthly.com** Webpage of the monthly news magazine.

**www.what2seonline.com** Penang-based food blog.

**www.penang.ws** Fairly up-to-date clearing house of hotel and restaurant listings.

## **i Getting There & Away**

### **AIR**

Penang's **Bayan Lepas International Airport** (2643 4411) is 18km south of George Town and was being renovated at the time of research. The airport has money exchange and car rental booths and a **Tourism Malaysia counter** (2642 6981; ground floor; 7am-10pm). The following airlines operate from Penang's airport:

**AirAsia** (2nationwide 600-85 8888; www.airasia.com) Flights to Bandung (Indonesia), Bangkok, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu, Kuala Lumpur, Kuching, Langkawi, Medan (Indonesia), Singapore and Surabaya (Indonesia).

**Cathay Pacific** (www.cathaypacific.com) Daily flights to/from Hong Kong.

**Firefly** (2nationwide 03-7845 4543; www.firefly.com.my) Flights to Banda Aceh (Indonesia), Kota Bharu, Kuala Lumpur, Kuantan, Langkawi, Medan (Indonesia), Melaka and Phuket (Thailand).

**Jetstar** (2nationwide 1800-81 3090; www.jetstar.com; Bayan Lepas International Airport; 7am-9pm) Flights to Adelaide (Australia), Bangkok, Gold Coast (Australia), Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Hong Kong, Jakarta, Launceston (Australia), Medan (Indonesia), Melbourne (Australia), Perth (Australia), Phuket (Thailand), Singapore, Surabaya (Indonesia) and Taipei.

**Malaysia Airlines** (2nationwide 1300-88 3000; www.malaysiaairlines.com) Conducts daily flights to/from Kuala Lumpur.

**Silk Air** (2263 3201; www.silkair.com; 12th fl, Plaza MWE, 8 Lebuhr Farquhar; 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Daily flights to Singapore.

**Thai Airways International** (2226 6000; www.thaiairways.co.th; 2nd fl, Burmah Place, 142-L Jln Burma; 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Conducts daily flights to/from Bangkok.

### **BOAT**

Several ferry providers, including **Langkawi Ferry Service** (LFS; 264 3088; www.langkawi-ferry.com; PPC Bldg, Pesara King Edward; 7am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun) have merged and operate a shared ferry service to Langkawi (adult/child one way RM60/45, return RM115/85; 1½ to 2½ hours). Boats leave at 8.15am and 8.30am. Boats return from Langkawi at 2.30pm and 5.15pm. Book a few days in advance to ensure a seat.

### **BUS**

All long-distance buses to George Town arrive at the Sungei Nibong Bus Station, just to the south

of Penang Bridge, while buses bound for Butterworth arrive at the Butterworth Bus Station. A taxi from Sungei Nibong to George Town costs RM25; a taxi from Butterworth can cost as much as RM50.

Buses to destinations in Malaysia can be boarded at Sungai Nibong and more conveniently, the Komtar bus station; international destinations only at the latter. Note that transport to Thailand (except to Hat Yai) is via minivan; minivans are also an option in getting to the Cameron Highlands and the Perhentian Islands.

DESTINATION	DURATION (HR)	FARE (RM)	FREQUENCY
Ipoh	2½	20	Frequent departures, 7.15am-3pm & 7.30pm-8pm
Hat Yai (Thailand)	4	30	5am, 8.30am, noon, 3.30pm & 4pm
Kuala Lumpur	5	35	Every 30min, 7am-1am
Tanah Rata	5	35-38	Frequent departures, 7.15am-2pm
Perhentian Islands (includes boat transfer)	6	150	7.30am, 8am & 11.30am
Kota Bharu	7	40	9am & 9pm
Melaka	7	45	Frequent, 9-10.30am & 10.30-11pm
Kuala Terengganu	8	50	9am & 9pm
Johor Bahru	9	55	Hourly, 8am-11.30pm
Singapore	10	53	Hourly, 9am & 8.30-11.30pm
Ko Samui (Thailand; Surat Thani transfer)	12	80	5am, 8.30am & noon
Ko Phi Phi (Thailand; Hat Yai transfer)	12	90	5am
Bangkok (Thailand; Surat Thani transfer)	17	115	5am, 8.30am & noon

## TRAIN

Penang's train station is next to the ferry terminal and bus and taxi station in Butterworth. There are three daily trains to Kuala Lumpur (six hours, RM34 to RM67) and one in the opposite direction to Hat Yai in Thailand (four hours, RM26 to RM108); check with [www.ktmb.com.my](http://www.ktmb.com.my) for the latest info on fares and schedules.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Penang's Bayan Lepas International Airport is 18km south of George Town. The fixed taxi fare is to most places in central George Town is RM44.70.

Taxis take about 30 minutes from the centre of town, while the bus takes at least an hour. Bus 401 runs to and from the airport (RM3) every half hour between 6am and 11pm daily and stops at Komtar and Weld Quay.

### BUS

Buses around Penang are run by the government-owned **Rapid Penang** ([www.rapidpg.com.my](http://www.rapidpg.com.my)). Fares are between RM1.40 and RM4. Most routes originate at Weld Quay Bus Terminal and most do also stop at Komtar and along Jln Chulia.

DESTINATION	ROUTE NO	PICK-UP
Batu Ferringhi	101	Pengkalan Weld, Lebuh Chulia, Komtar
Bayan Lepas International Airport, Teluk Kumbar	401	Pengkalan Weld, Lebuh Chulia
Persiaran Gurney	103	Pengkalan Weld, Air Itam, Komtar
Penang Hill	204	Pengkalan Weld, Lebuh Chulia, Komtar
Sungei Nibong Bus Station	401	Pengkalan Weld, Lebuh Chulia, Komtar
Teluk Bahang	101, 102	Pengkalan Weld, Bayan Lepas International Airport

### CAR

**La Belle** ([2627717](tel:2627717); [www.labelle.net.my](http://www.labelle.net.my); 48 Lebuh Leith) car rental operates out of George Town. The companies listed below are based at Bayan Lepas International Airport.

**New Bob Rent-A-Car** ([6441111](tel:6441111); [www.bobcar.com.my](http://www.bobcar.com.my); Bayan Lepas International Airport; ☎8am-10pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Sat-Sun)

**Avis** ([6439633](tel:6439633); [www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com); Bayan Lepas International Airport; ☎8am-9pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat-Sun)

**Kasina** ([6447893](tel:6447893); [www.kasina.com.my](http://www.kasina.com.my); Bayan Lepas International Airport; ☎7.30am-10pm Mon-Sat & 8.30am-5pm Sun)

**Pacific Rent-A-Car (PRAC)**; [6438891](tel:6438891); [www.iprac.com](http://www.iprac.com); Bayan Lepas International Airport; ☎7.30am-10pm Mon-Sat & 8am-6pm Sun)

### MOTORCYCLE

You can hire motorcycles from many places, including guesthouses and shops along Lebuh Chulia or out at Batu Ferringhi. Manual bikes start at about RM20 and automatic about RM30, for 24 hours.

### TAXI

Penang's taxis all have meters, which drivers flatly refuse to use, so negotiate the fare before you set off. Typical fares to places outside of the city centre start at around RM12. Taxis can be found on Jln Penang, near Cititel Hotel, at the Weld Quay Bus Terminal and near Komtar bus station.

### TRISHAW

Bicycle rickshaws are a fun, if touristy, way to negotiate George Town's backstreets and cost around RM40 per hour – the same as with taxis, it's important to agree on the fare before departure. Drivers can be found waiting near Cititel Hotel.

## Batu Ferringhi

For years, and no doubt aided by the tourism authorities, the lure of sun and sand at Batu Ferringhi was the main reason people came to Penang. In reality, the beach can't compare to Malaysia's best; the water isn't as clear as you might expect, swimming often means battling jellyfish, and the beach itself can be dirty, especially on weekends when hordes of day trippers visit. Still, it is the best easy-access beach stop on the island, and it does make a pleasant break from the city.

The vast majority of the area's accommodation and restaurants are located along Jln Batu Ferringhi, the main strip, a short walk from the beach.

## Activities

You'll find plenty of **watersports** rental outfits along the beach; they tend to rent **wave runners** (RM120 for 30 minutes), as well as offer **water-skiing** (RM60 for 15 minutes) and **parasailing** (RM80 per ride) trips.

## SPICE UP YOUR LIFE

Along the road to Teluk Bahang is the **Tropical Spice Garden** (☎881 1797; [www.tropicalspicegarden.com](http://www.tropicalspicegarden.com); Jln Teluk Bahang; adult/child RM14/10, incl tour RM22/15; ☀9am-6pm), an oasis of exotic, fragrant fecundity of more than 500 species of flora, with an emphasis on spices. Ferns, bamboo, ginger and heliconias are among the lush vegetation and you might spot a giant monitor lizard or two. The restaurant here, Tree Monkey, is also excellent, and the garden also offers **cooking courses** (RM200; ☀lessons 9am-1pm Mon-Sat).

To get here, take bus 101 towards Teluk Bahang and ask to get off at the Spice Garden (RM2).

After which you might need a relaxing **massage**. All sorts of foot masseuses will offer you their services; expect to pay around RM40 for a 30-minute deep-tissue massage.



## Festivals

### Penang Beach Carnival

CARNIVAL

This carnival in Batu Ferringhi is highlighted by traditional sporting events such as *gas uri* (top spinning) and *sepak takraw* (a ball game played over a net, much like badminton but with the players using their feet). Held in November.

### Penang Island Jazz Festival

MUSIC

([www.penangjazz.com](http://www.penangjazz.com)) This event features local and international artists at changing venues in Batu Ferringhi. Held in November/December.



## Sleeping

Batu Ferringhi has lots of somewhat overpriced, chain-style resorts catering to families, and quite a few extremely overpriced, homestay-type budget places, but very little in between.



### Lone Pine Hotel

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎886 8686; [www.lonepinehotel.com](http://www.lonepinehotel.com); 97 Jln Batu Ferringhi; incl breakfast r/ste RM680-840/950-2940; ☀@☀☀) Dating back to the 1940s, the Lone Pine is one of Batu Ferringhi's oldest resorts. A 2010 remodel and expansion has given the hotel a new lease on life, while still preserving many of its classier original aspects. The 90 rooms all have some kind of perk, personal plunge pools, for example, or private gardens. They also feel quite large, and are decorated with splashes of colour and attractive furniture. The grounds have a stately, national park-like feel, with hammocks suspended between the pines (actually casuarina trees), and a huge saltwater pool as a centrepiece.

### Rasa Sayang Resort

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎881 1966; [www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com); Jln Batu Ferringhi; incl breakfast r/ste RM1080-2130/1710-10,000; ☀@☀☀) Part of the Shangri-La chain, this is a vast and luxurious establishment – the island's only five-star resort – that feels like something out of a South Sea dream. Rooms are large and decorated with fine hardwood furniture, and cloud-like white duvets float on the beds; all have balconies and many have sea views. There's a yoga studio, tennis courts, a putting green and several restaurants. The hotel's Chi Spa is among the poshest on Penang.

### EQ

HOTEL \$\$

(☎885 1533; [www.eqferringhi.com](http://www.eqferringhi.com); 17 Lorong Sungai Emas; r RM88-148; ☀☀) If you need a midrange hotel and are OK with zero character and a short walk to the beach, this is your place. Rooms are spacious, and equipped with aircon, TV and large-feeling bathrooms with hot water – and that's about it.

EQ is located behind the Eden Parade shopping complex, near the petrol station intersection; there are a couple similar places nearby.

### Hard Rock Hotel

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎881 1711; [www.penang.hardrockhotels.net](http://www.penang.hardrockhotels.net); Jln Batu Ferringhi; incl breakfast r/ste RM700-1300/1350-4000; ☀@☀☀) If you can stomach the corny hyper-corporate vibe (and the unrelenting gaze of Beatles memorabilia), this resort – at research time, Batu Ferringhi's youngest – can be a fun place to stay. There's a particular emphasis on family friendliness, and child-friendly pools, kid-friendly suites and teen-themed play areas (complete with pool table and video games), making it an easy decision for anyone travelling with children.

### Parkroyal

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎881 1133; [www.parkroyalhotels.com](http://www.parkroyalhotels.com); Jln Batu Ferringhi; incl breakfast r/ste RM745-1245/1245-2745;

☼☼☼☼ The 1980s-era exterior here is a pretty good indicator of what's going on inside: 324 standard and comfortable, but non-flashy rooms. The grounds are more a reason to stay, with three pools, some with islands in them, lots of lawn to bask on and a great strip of beach out front.

### Ferringhi Inn

HOTEL \$\$

(☎881 9999; [www.feringhiinn.blogspot.com](http://www.feringhiinn.blogspot.com); 3A Lorong Sungai Emas; r RM80-160; ☼☼) The flagship rooms at this budget hotel are located behind the Eden Parade shopping centre, a couple of blocks from the sea. A more appealing option is the duplex brick bungalow, right on the beach in the backpacker zone, that's been made into two large and comfy rooms equipped with TV, air-con, fridge and terrace.

### D'Feringghi

HOTEL \$\$

(☎881 9000; [www.dferingghihotel.com](http://www.dferingghihotel.com); 66 Jln Batu Ferringhi; r RM145-180; ☼☼) This hotel won't inspire any postcards home, but it's a contender within its price bracket. Rooms are clean and – for Batu Ferringhi, at least – inexpensive.

Located roughly opposite Tarbush restaurant, a brief walk to the beach.

### Holiday Inn Resort

RESORT \$\$

(☎881 1601; [www.holidayinnresorts.com/penang](http://www.holidayinnresorts.com/penang); 72 Jln Batu Ferringhi; incl breakfast r/ste RM550-660/810; ☼☼☼☼) A big, family-friendly resort with accommodation blocks on either side of the main road – you can't miss this hotel. It's yet another place that's great for kids, with expansive pools and themed 'kid-suites', which come with TV, video and Play-station. There's also tennis courts and a gym for the adults.

### Lazy Boys

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎881 2486; [www.lazyboystravelodge.net](http://www.lazyboystravelodge.net); off Jln Batu Ferringhi; dm/r RM18/35-150; ☼) This is the type of budget place some travellers live for and others flee from. Think of your university dorm if it was run by a laid-back Malaysian rocker, and you begin to get the idea. Dorms and rooms are clean enough, and there's amenities ranging from a kitchen to free laundry, but the music room (complete with drum kit) and spotty service are bad signs for those who cherish convenience and/or quiet.

Lazy Boys is located just off the main strip, approximately across from Tarbush restaurant.

### Baba Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎881 1686; [babaguesthouse2000@yahoo.com](mailto:babaguesthouse2000@yahoo.com); 52 Batu Ferringhi; r RM50-95; ☼) This is a wonderfully ramshackle, blue-painted house that shows off the heart and soul of its resident (and very active) Chinese family. Rooms are large and spotless – although bare – and most have shared bathrooms, while the dearer air-con rooms come with a fridge and shower.

### Shalini's Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎012-407 3822; [www.shanilisguesthouse.blogspot.co](http://www.shanilisguesthouse.blogspot.co); 56 Batu Ferringhi; r RM40-250; ☼) This old, two-storey wooden house on the beach has a family atmosphere. Rooms are basic but neat and some have balconies. The priciest ones have private bathrooms.

### ET Budget Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎881 1553; [etguesthouse2006@yahoo.com](mailto:etguesthouse2006@yahoo.com); 47 Batu Ferringhi; fan/air-con RM50/85; ☼) In a bright and open double-storey Chinese home with polished wood floors. Only the air-con rooms have TVs and en suite bathrooms.

### Ismail Beach Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎016-454 1953; [cabinidn@yahoo.com](mailto:cabinidn@yahoo.com); Batu Ferringhi; r RM80-160; ☼) Right on the beach, the rooms here have air-con, attached bath as well as TV.



## Eating & Drinking

You can get a beer at most non-Halal places, but toes-in-the-sand type beach bars are few – **Bora Bora** (Jln Batu Ferringhi; ☼noon-1am Sun-Thur, to 3am Fri-Sat) is an exception.

### Tree Monkey

THAI \$\$

(Tropical Spice Garden, Teluk Bahang; mains RM12.80-48.80; ☼9am-11pm) A Thai owner oversees a huge variety of tasty Southeast Asian and Thai dishes, including several 'tapas' sets (RM30 to RM98). This is alfresco at its best, under a thatched roof and surrounded by gorgeous gardens with a view of the sea. It's also an excellent place for a sunset cocktail.

Tree Monkey is located at the Tropical Spice Garden, about halfway between Batu Ferringhi and Teluk Bahang; hop on bus 101 (RM2) or take a taxi from Batu Ferringhi (around RM10).

### Tarbush

MIDDLE EASTERN \$\$\$

([www.tarbush.com.my](http://www.tarbush.com.my); Jln Batu Ferringhi; mains RM12-55; ☼10-1am; ☼) Middle Eastern

tourists and residents have brought their food to Batu Ferringhi, and Lebanese restaurants line the town's main strip. The best of the lot is most likely this branch of a KL restaurant empire. There's lots to choose from, but we like the two 'mezze platters', which bring together everything from tabouli (a bulgur salad) to *kibbeh* (meatballs with bulgur).

Tarbus is located approximately in the middle of town – look for the large seaside building topped with a fez.

### Long Beach

MALAYSIAN \$\$

(Jln Batu Ferringhi; mains from RM4; ☎6.30-11.30pm) This buzzy hawker centre has the usual selection of Chinese noodle dishes, Indian breads and meat curries, and Malaysian seafood dishes.

Long Beach is located approximately in the centre of Batu Ferringhi's main strip, not far from the petrol station intersection.

### Bungalow

INTERNATIONAL \$\$

(☎886 8686; www.lonepinehotel.com; 97 Jln Batu Ferringhi, Lone Pine Hotel; mains RM16-48; ☹) The eponymous bungalow dates back to the 1940s, and is where the Lone Pine hotel sprang from. Today, the restaurant maintains the historical link with dishes such as Chicken chop and Macaroni pie – remnants of the era when Hainanese chefs, former colonial-era domestic servants, dominated restaurant kitchens. Other Malaysian and international dishes are available.

### Ferringhi Garden

INTERNATIONAL \$\$

(Jln Batu Ferringhi; mains RM20.80-95.80; ☎dinner) Everyone falls in love with the outdoor setting here of terracotta tiles and hardwoods surrounded by bamboo, tall potted plants, hanging mosses and cut orchids in elegant vases. Unfortunately the menu, which emphasises steaks and prawns, isn't as inspiring. During the daytime hours, an adjacent café serves breakfast and real coffee – a relative rarity in Batu Ferringhi.

Ferringhi Garden is located a block or so west of the Holiday Inn.

## ① Getting There & Away

Bus 101 runs from Weld Quay and from Komtar, in George Town, and takes around 30 minutes to reach Batu Ferringhi (RM4). A taxi to Batu Ferringhi from George Town will cost at least RM35.

## Teluk Bahang & Around

If Batu Ferringhi is Penang's version of Cancun or Bali, Teluk Bahang is the quiet (sometimes deathly so) beach a few kilometres past the party.

## 👁 Sights

At research time, **Escape** (www.escape.my), an 'eco theme park', was under construction near the Butterfly Farm – it should be open by the time you're reading this.

There are a couple worthwhile sights (a tropical fruit farm and a butterfly farm) south of Teluk Bahang; both can be reached on bus 501, which runs from Teluk Bahang four times a day (RM2).

### Penang National Park

PARK

(Taman Negara Pulau Pinang; admission free, canopy walkway adult/child RM7/5; ☎canopy walkway 10am-1pm & 2-4pm Sat-Thurs) At just 2300 hectares, Penang National Park is the smallest in Malaysia; it's also one of the newest, attaining national park status in 2003. It has some interesting and challenging trails through the jungle, as well as some of Penang's finest and quietest beaches.

The **office** (☎881 3500; ☎8am-6pm) at the park entrance has a few maps and leaflets and can help you plan your day. Just across from the main park office is the **Penang Nature Tourist Guide Association** (PNTGA; ☎881 4788; www.pntga.org) office, which offers **guide services** with a slew of options, such as trekking (four hours for RM100) and many where you can hike one way then get a ride back in a boat (four hours including boat transport for two people RM200), and also specialist tours such as birdwatching, seasonal visits to a turtle hatchery and mangrove tours. It's best to reserve longer tours in advance with agencies around George Town or at your hotel.

The park entrance is a short walk from Teluk Bahang's main bus stop. From here it's an easy 20-minute walk to the 250m-long **canopy walkway**, suspended 15m up in the trees from where you can hear water flowing from the mountain and get a view over the broccoli-headed park. The walkway was being renovated when we stopped by, and closes if it's raining. From here, you have the choice of heading towards Teluk Tukun and Muka Head or to Pantai Kerachut. The easiest walk is the 20-minute stroll to **Teluk Tukun** beach where Sungai Tukun flows

into the ocean. There are some little pools to swim in here. Following this trail along the coast about 25 minutes more brings you to the private University of Malaysia Marine Research Station, where there is a supply jetty, as well as **Tanjung Aling**, a nice beach to stop at for a rest. From here it's another 45 minutes or so down the beach to **Teluk Duyung**, also called Monkey Beach, after the numerous primates who scamper about here on the beach on **Muka Head**, the isolated rocky promontory at the extreme northwestern corner of the island. On the peak of the head, another 15 minutes along, is an off-limits 1883 lighthouse and an Ache-nese-style graveyard. The views of the surrounding islands from up here are worth the sweaty uphill jaunt.

A longer and more difficult trail heads left from the suspension bridge towards **Pantai Kerachut**, a beautiful white-sand beach that is a popular spot for picnics and is a green turtle nesting ground. Count on about two hours to walk to the beach on the well-used trail. On your way is the unusual meromictic lake, a rare natural feature composed of two separate layers of unmixed freshwater on top and seawater below, supporting a unique mini-ecosystem. From Pantai Kerachut beach you can walk about two hours onward to further-flung and isolated **Teluk Kampi**, which is the longest beach in the park; look for trenches along the coast that are remnants of the Japanese occupation in WWII.

### Tropical Fruit Farm

FARM

(www.tropicalfruits.com.my; tour adult/child RM35/28; ☉9am-5pm) About 2km south of Teluk Bahang is the 10-hectare hillside farm, which cultivates over 250 types of tropical and subtropical fruit trees, native and hybrid. Its one-hour **tours** include fruit tastings and a glass of fresh juice.

### Penang Butterfly Farm

FARM

(www.butterfly-insect.com; 830 Jln Teluk Bahang; adult/child RM27/15; ☉9am-5pm) Several thousand live butterflies representing over 150 species flap around here like buttery pastel clouds. There's also some fascinating beetles, lizards and spiders crawling about.

## Sleeping & Eating

Teluk Bahang is only 4km from Batu Ferringhi so if the few sleeping options here don't suit you, there are plenty more over there.

The main shopping area along the road heading east to Batu Ferringhi has a few coffee shops where you'll find cheaper Chinese dishes and seafood, as well as a couple of South Indian places, such as **Restoran Khaleef** (Jln Teluk Bahang; mains from RM4; ☉24hr), that sell *murtabak* and *dosa* (savoury Indian pancakes).

### Chalet Sportfishing

HOTEL \$\$

(☎881 9190; Jln Teluk Bahang; r RM80-130; ☉☉) Probably Teluk Bahang's most comfortable place to stay, the two floors of plain rooms are at the edge of the beach and look over the fishing pier. The more expensive rooms have up to five beds. The Malay owner doesn't speak a great deal of English.

### Ali's Motel

HOTEL \$\$

(☎885 1937; Jln Teluk Bahang; d/r RM30/80-180; ☉) The rooms here are plain, but come equipped with TV, air-con and hot water showers. If the friendly, English-speaking owner isn't around, service is nonexistent and communication can be difficult. Ali's is located next door to Restoran Khaleel, near Teluk Bahang's main bus stop.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 101 runs from George Town every half-hour all the way along the north coast of the island as far as the roundabout in Teluk Bahang (RM4). A taxi here from the centre of George Town will cost at least RM40.

## Pulau Jerejak

Lying 1.5 nautical miles off Penang's south-east coast, thickly forested Pulau Jerejak has been home to a leper colony and a prison in its time, and is today occupied by the **Jerejak Rainforest Resort** (☎658 7111; www.jerejakresort.com; r RM210-420; ☉☉☉☉). Packages available through the website, which usually include transport, breakfast and a massage, make staying here good value. **Camping** (RM80 to RM100) is also an option.

The resort has its own jetty, with boats leaving roughly every two hours (adult/child RM6/3). **Day-trip package tours** (adult/child RM50-60/30-35) allow access to pool and other activities including rock climbing.

No buses run past the jetty; a taxi from George Town will cost around RM50.



## HOMESTAYS

Several enterprising locals take part in a homestay collective. Most are located on the side roads that link the sea and the road that leads to Penang National Park. Accommodation is basic, but generally clean, and there's the added bonus of cultural exposure.

**Kasian Homestay** (☎012-415 3609; house RM200) Mr Zulkifley rents out a small two-bedroom house, complete with kitchen, or a flat with two rooms. Prices are negotiable. The 'Kasian Homestay' signs peter out the closer you get to the actual destination, so call for pick up.

**Fisherman Village Guest House** (☎012-483 9263; r RM20) Nine weather-beaten rooms, all with fan and shared bathroom, in the home of an elderly couple.

**Miss Loh's Guest House** (☎885 1227; r RM30-40) A garden-set, ramshackle guest-house located off the main strip that feels as if it's run by the guests (most of whom are sticking around for a bit). To find the guesthouse, stop in at the store opposite Restaurant Khaleel that says 'GH Information'.

## Snake Temple

The most misleadingly named destination in Penang is about 3km before the airport. Yes, there are snakes at the **temple** (Temple of the Azure Cloud; snake exhibition adult/child RM5/3; ☉9:30am-6pm) but, c'mon, with a name like that you expect beating drums and mad monks wielding 20-foot vipers. It's heavily touted but is essentially just a temple with some snakes sleeping on sticks. There's a very depressing **snake exhibition** with tanks containing various snakes in a walled-off section, and a few bored-looking snake handlers who will charge RM30 for taking your photo holding a snake.

Bus 302 runs every 30 minutes from Weld Quay and Komtar and passes the temple (RM4).

## Batu Maung

At the end of the Bayan Lepas Expressway you'll reach the turn-off to the Chinese fishing village of Batu Maung. Once home to a biodiverse mangrove swamp, encroaching development from the Bayan Lepas Industrial Zone has resulted in extensive clearing. Development here is expected to skyrocket with the building of the new bridge linking Penang to the mainland. It's Penang's deep-sea fishing port so there are plenty of dilapidated, brightly painted boats along the coast.

The renovated seaside temple here, **Sam Poh Temple** (admission free), has a shrine dedicated to the legendary Admiral Cheng Ho, who was also known as Sam Poh. The

temple sanctifies a huge 'footprint' on the rock that's reputed to belong to the famous navigator.

Perched on top of the steep Bukit Batu Maung is the **Penang War Museum** (☎626 5142; Bukit Batu Maung; adult/child RM35/17; ☉9am-6pm & 7-11pm). This former British fort, built in the 1930s, was used as a prison and torture camp by the Japanese during WWII. Today, the crumbling buildings have been restored as a memorial to those dark days. Barracks, ammunition stores, cookhouses, gun emplacements and other structures can be explored here, which also offers 'suspense & eerie' night visits and paintball (from RM75).

Also in town is the **Penang Aquarium** (admission adult/child RM5/2; ☉10am-5pm Thur-Tue), which houses 25 tanks filled with colourful fish; there is a tactile tank with a young green turtle, and visitors can also feed koi.

Bus 307 leaves for Batu Maung every half hour from Weld Quay and Komtar (RM4); a taxi here will cost about RM50.

## Kampung Pulau Betong

This is a fishing village utterly off the beaten track with delightful *kampung* houses, flowers and colourful docked boats. At around 5.30pm the fishing boats come in and sell their fish at the little market near the dock. Bus 403 runs from Balik Pulau as far as the market (RM1.40), but if you walk another 1.5km you'll come to **Pantai Pasir Panjang**, an empty, pristine beach with white sand the texture of raw sugar – one of the prettier spots on the island for the

## ESCAPING THE WORLD

Every now and then a Lonely Planet writer comes across a place so special it makes all the days of tirelessly slogging through sweaty cheap hotels worth it. **Malihom** (☎226 4466; www.malihom.com; all-inclusive RM570-700; 🏠🍴🍷🍺) is one of those places. Nine 100-year-old rice barns were imported from Thailand and brought up to this 518m peak where they have been restored to a cramped but comfortable state in a Balinese style. But you won't want to stay inside; walk around the small complex to gawk at the 360-degree view over hills of jungle, the sea and several villages. The most serene infinity pool on the island is guarded by white Buddhas, the grounds are a perfect balance of shade, flowers and koi ponds, there's a conference room and yoga studio, and indoor hang-out areas perfect for sipping espresso or a glass of wine from the cellar, reading a book or watching movies. Basically you come here to completely relax because, aside from a few walks, mountain biking or fruit picking, there's blissfully little to do.

The retreat is located off winding Route 6 between Balik Pulau and Kampung Sungai Batu, and you'll need to be shuttled in their 4WD up the steep hill that leads to Malihom.

few who make the effort to get here. The beach is backed by a National Service Training Centre for young graduates entering the army. Be vigilant if you go into the water – there's a heavy undertow.

## Teluk Kumbar

Penangites come to **Teluk Kumbar** with one thing in mind: seafood. While some housing estates have sprung up recently, the village

is still a calm and beautiful stretch of sands. Stop at one of the Malay food stalls for some *mee udang* (spicy noodles with prawns) or visit **Hai Boey Seafood** (☎013-488 1114; 29 MK9 Pasir Belanda, Teluk Kumbar; mains RM8-50; 🍽️lunch & dinner), one of Penang's most famous destinations for seafood; call ahead to reserve a table on weekends or holidays.

Buses 401 and 401E pass Teluk Kumbar (RM4); a taxi here will cost about RM60.

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